IMAGINING KINSHIP AND REARTICULATING IMMIGRATION: TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION FROM CHINA FROM 1882 TO THE PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s, adoption from China has become a striking phenomenon in the United States. Adoption of Chinese children, usually female, by primarily white Americans has been highly visible in America, and media coverage of celebrities—such as Hollywood stars Meg Ryan and Woody Allen and former U.S. ambassador to China Jon Huntsman—adopting Chinese girls further adds to this visibility. However, such high visibility overshadows other forms of adoption from China. Even in the Exclusion Era from 1882 to 1943, transnational adoption from China existed, primarily in the form of so-called "paper sons" (and a few "paper daughters"), who entered through counterfeit, usually purchased, documents that proved their legal status as children of American citizens. In order to immigrate, paper children created non-blood parent-child, or de facto adoptive, relationship with their paper families. Moreover, in the 1950s and 1960s, more than 1,000 Chinese children, most of whom were from Chinese refugee families, were adopted into the United States from Hong Kong predominantly by Chinese Americans.

My dissertation examines transnational adoption from China by situating it in the Chinese immigration history from 1882 to the present. Departing from existing research mainly undertaken from sociological, anthropological, or psychological perspectives, I explore an understudied area—representations of transnational adoption in cultural texts. Adoption does not occur in a vacuum. I argue that transnational adoption has become a site of power contestations through which different parties—individuals from the sending and receiving countries, Chinese and American nation-states, and the British empire as represented by the Hong Kong Colonial government—made meanings to serve their own purposes. In this process, racialized, gendered, and ideological meanings and discourses about Chinese children, women, immigrants, white adoptive parents, China, the British empire, and the United States have been produced and circulated. Juxtaposing the discourses produced by mainstream media from these political entities with the narratives and voices of individuals exposes how these dominant discourses are

selective, incomplete, competing, contradictory, and sometimes inaccurate and ineffective on the one hand, and highlight the centrality of racialization and gendering in U.S. family formation and nation building, on the other.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCAA	the China Center of Adoption Affairs
CCCWA	China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption
CCF	China Children's Fund founded by J. Calvitt Clarke.
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	the China Central Television
DSW	the Hong Kong Department of Social Welfare
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ISS	the International Social Service
MFN	the most-favored nation status
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
R.M.U.	the Refugee and Migration Unit
WAIF	the World Adoption International Fund

Introduction

Stepping into my classroom at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in the fall of 2012, I was surprised to see a senior white woman sitting in my Chinese class. That was how I got to know Linda, a white mother of three adopted Chinese daughters. Driven by the desire to understand her daughters' birth culture and encourage them to learn Chinese, she became the most diligent student in my class that semester. Once we got to know each other better, she began to tell me how she and her husband had adopted their daughters. "Why did you choose to adopt only girls?" I asked one day. She told me she knew girls in China were suffering, and she wished she could adopt more girls and offer them a better life. "You can't imagine what would happen to the girls if they were left in China!" She exclaimed, with tears in her eyes. I tried to find out how she came to have the impression that girls were suffering in China, but she couldn't remember where she got that information. However, she recalled that in the 1990s, when she and her husband decided to adopt from China, news of girls suffering in China "was everywhere." She then attributed the phenomenon of girls suffering to China's birth-planning policy, referred to as the "one-child policy" in the Western world.

Linda's words reminded me of my own life. I was born and raised in the Chinese countryside by a midwife mother, or "barefoot doctor," a doctor without formal medical schoolings but trained to be an obstetrician and physician. My mother practiced midwifery in the 1980s when the birth-planning policy was enforced. Born a female and later travelling far and wide for college or simply for sightseeing in the country, I never felt I or most other girls I met were suffering. But as a midwife's daughter I understand how deeply the birth-planning policy has affected Chinese people's lives in the past thirty years. When I was little, I often saw worried women come to our house, telling my mother that they were pregnant again. Since they could have only one baby (or two if the first was a girl, since 1988) the only solution was abortion. I do not remember my mother performing abortion on anyone, but she was often requested by the

trusting, grateful husbands to accompany their pregnant wives to the hospital. Sometimes I heard her talking to both husbands and wives and urging them to decide which one should get sterilized to protect the wives from multiple pregnancies and abortions.

It is my conversations with Linda and my life as a barefoot doctor's daughter that have shaped my interest in studying transnational adoption from China from the perspective of cultural representations. Linda's words triggered my interest in researching how this subject has been represented in U.S. cultural texts and how China and Chinese people, specifically women and girls, have been constructed in the representations. On the other hand, my memory of the faces of those pregnant women and their husbands pushed me to question why they, even my mother as their doctor, blamed only the unexpected pregnancies without questioning the policy that left the women with no other choice but abortions and sterilizations. What messages have been constructed in China concerning the birth-planning policy, and conceivably, about other aspects of transnational adoption from China?

Growing up in China and receiving academic training in the United States, I position myself as both an insider and outsider of China's transnational adoption. My goal in this dissertation, much as Xiaomei Chen states in her book *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, is not to look for "'truth' and 'falsity' of a particular ideological position," but look into how certain ideologies and discourses are constructed.[1] It is this positionality that has shaped my perspective of viewing transnational adoption from China as a complicated site of knowledge production in which different parties, both political entities and individuals, have created and continue to create meanings.

Overview: Transnational Adoption from China

Since the 1990s, adoption from China has become a striking phenomenon in the United States. China has remained the major sending country of orphans since the early 1990s and has

[1] Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (second edition, revised and expanded), (Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman &Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 13.

ranked the first almost every year since 2000, and the United States has been the largest receiving country.[2] By the end of the 1990s, the number of Chinese adoptees reached 30,000.[3] From 1999 to 2016, another 78,253 entered as adoptees.[4] Adoption of Chinese children, usually female, by primarily white Americans has been highly visible in America, and media coverage of celebrities—such as Hollywood stars Meg Ryan and Woody Allen and former U.S. ambassador to China Jon Huntsman—adopting Chinese girls further adds to this visibility.

However, such high visibility overshadows other forms of adoption from China. Even in the Exclusion Era from 1882 to 1943, transnational adoption from China existed, primarily in the form of so-called "paper sons" (and a few "paper daughters"), who entered through counterfeit, usually purchased, documents that proved their legal status as children of American citizens. In order to immigrate, paper children created non-blood parent-child, or de facto adoptive, relationship with their paper families. Moreover, in the 1950s and 1960s, more than 1,000 Chinese children, most of whom were from Chinese refugee families, were adopted into the United States from Hong Kong predominantly by Chinese Americans.

My dissertation examines transnational adoption from China by situating it in the Chinese immigration history from 1882 to the present. Departing from existing research mainly undertaken from sociological, anthropological, or psychological perspectives, I explore an understudied area—representations of transnational adoption in cultural texts. Adoption does not occur in a vacuum. As adoption scholar Mark C. Jerng argues, the attachment between persons, and especially the parent-child bond based on adoption, is never "a natural, prepolitical relationship untouched by various social conventions"; rather, children have become "objects of political intervention through which personhood is constituted."[5] Transnational adoption can be

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[2] The only exception is 2008 when Guatemala ranked the first.
[3] Toby Alice Volkman, "Embodying Chinese Culture: Transnational Adoption in North America," in *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, ed. Toby Alice Volkman (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 82.
[4] "Statistics," *Intercountry Adoption,* by Bureau of Consulate Affairs, U.S. Department of State, accessed September 20, 2017, https://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/about-us/statistics.html
[5] Mark C. Jerng, *Claiming Others: Transracial Adoption and National Belonging* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xix, xxi.

thus seen as a site in which political interventions are made and social meanings are created, particularly through cultural texts. My aim is to demonstrate how cultural texts produced by the United States from the Exclusion Era to the present, early Cold War Hong Kong, and post-1990s China represent adoption from China and how the representations evolved over time. I am also interested in how these representations are unsettled, challenged, or complicated by other types of texts, including writings by adult and youth adoptees, voices from birth parents in the Cold War adoption, and the Chinese investigative reports about corruption involved in post-1990s adoption.

I argue that transnational adoption has become a site of power contestations through which different parties—individuals from the sending and receiving countries, Chinese and American nation-states, and the British empire as represented by the Hong Kong Colonial government—made meanings to serve their own purposes. In this process, raced, gendered, and ideological meanings and discourses about Chinese children, women, immigrants, white adoptive parents, China, the British empire, and the United States have been produced and circulated. Transnational adoption of Chinese orphans thus turns into a transnational and transpacific project of cultural representations, in which not only the United States, but also early Cold War Britain and post-1990s China produced knowledge about Chinese orphans, adoption, themselves and each other.[6]

Examining transnational adoption from China through cultural representations in the framework of Chinese immigration is significant. For one thing, juxtaposing the discourses produced by mainstream media from these political entities with the narratives and voices of individuals exposes how these dominant discourses are selective, incomplete, competing,

[6] In order to highlight my project as a transnational one, I choose the term "transnational adoption." There are a variety of terms used in previous studies concerning adoption from China, ranging from "transnational adoption," "intercountry adoption," "transracial adoption," "interracial adoption" and "international adoption." Yet, as Catherine Ceniza Choy puts, "transnational adoption" is a term commonly used by scholars of adoption, as "it emphasizes the ways that the phenomenon creates a significant social field between two or more specific nation-states." See Choy, *Global Families: A History of Asian International Adoption in America* (New York and London: New York University Press), 117. Other scholars who use the term are, for instance, Eleana Kim, Sara K. Dorow, and Toby Alice Volkman.

contradictory, and sometimes inaccurate and ineffective. For another, analyzing adoption from China in different time periods and positioning it in the framework of immigration also highlight the centrality of racialization and gendering in U.S. family formation and nation building. On the one hand, in these cultural presentations, transnational adoption and Chinese adoptees help sustain the ideal U.S. nuclear family with clear-cut gender roles and with white adoptive mothers symbolizing the United States as a loving caregiver and permanent home provider. On the other hand, the cultural representations also expose how post-1990s Chinese adoptees are often not considered as immigrants by adoptive parents, which further racializes Chinese immigrants, especially paper children immigrants, as perpetually unassimilable aliens and outsiders.

The title of my dissertation, "Imagining Kinship and Rearticulating Immigration," stresses two overarching themes. First, I emphasize the imaginative, constructed, fictive nature of kinship making in transnational adoption. I borrow the term of "fictive kinship" from Catherine Lee, who argues that family is a fictive construct through which immigration stakeholders make immigration policies not only to control immigration but to "shape a racialized national identity."[7] As the word "fictive" has multiple meanings, I view it primarily as the adjective form of "fiction," rather than the antonym of "real." In other words, by deliberately choosing the word "fictive," I contend that kinship formation through adoption, including many immigrant families formed through paper children immigration/adoption and adoptive families through of Cold War and post-1990s adoptions, is neither unreal nor fake but is a product of ideological construction and cultural imagination. With this notion in mind, I unsettle the binary of real/unreal Chinese immigrant families constructed in U.S. dominant discourse about paper children. Likewise, in Cold War adoption from Hong Kong, the vast majority of adoptees were not "orphans" but were imagined as such by the U.S. and Hong Kong mainstream media as well as their own birth parents. I draw attention to the discursive process in which the mainstream media represented adoption and how some birth parents took advantage of this process to carve out alternative

[7] Catherine Lee, *Fictive Kinship: Family Reunification and the Meaning of Race and Nation in American Immigration* (New York: the Russell Sage Foundation, 2013), 6, 8.

immigration opportunities for their children. Post-1990s adoption is marked with a new type of imaginary construction. Writings of white adoptive parents are either driven by the narrative of an imaginative "right match," or by the parents' imagination of the Chinese birth mother. I challenge these narratives that naturalize the adoptive parent-children relationship as predestined while obscuring the unequal power relationships between them and Chinese birth parents as well as between China and the United States.

By stressing the fictive nature of kinship making through adoption, I also point out that families—whether biological or not, whether legal or not—are created through a variety of choices, or limitations thereof, on the part of birth parents, adoptive parents, adoptees, and nations. It is this element of choice that gives power not only to the families but also the nations involved. As Jerng argues, adoption privileges the idea of choice—parents choose children and children are chosen—and that kinship is formed through choice rather than consanguinity.[8] Such a kinship based on choice, as Dorow observes, has to be imagined by adoptive parents as "the fantasy of connected fate."[9] Post-1990s adoption is, first of all, about choices of predominantly white, affluent American adoptive parents who could not procreate themselves but had the economic and cultural capital to adopt internationally. On the flip side, we see many, if not all, Chinese birth parents were deprived of the choice of raising their own, primarily female, babies due to a number of factors. These factors include the stringent enforcement of birth-planning policy and the necessity of having a son to provide for their old ages in a society which lacked a proper social welfare system and which stressed that a daughter share her husband's responsibilities to look after his parents rather than taking care of her own parents after marrying out.[10] In this tension of choice and deprivation of choice, power relations between the Chinese

[8] Jerng, *Claiming Others,* xxi.
[9] Sara Dorow, *Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship* (New York and London: New York University Press), 109.
[10] From the 1990s when this wave of transnational adoption from China started to the present, Chinese society has experienced tremendous transformations. The social factors I mention here were the realities in the 1990s, but since the early 2000s, with China's rise as an increasingly influential world power, its social welfare in rural areas has been improved greatly. So is the gender norms. In many places, both sons and daughters undertake the responsibility of providing for their aged parents.

state and birth parents, between the sending and receiving countries, and between adoptive and birth parents are brought to the surface.

However, in paper children immigration/adoption during the Exclusion Era and adoption from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s, Chinese birth parents exercised their power in choosing whether to have their child(ren)—and if so, which child(ren)—adopted into the United States. In both cases, opportunities to immigrate to America were limited by restrictive U.S. immigration law, but the birth parents sought out means to send their children to the United States through legal or de facto adoption. In Cold War adoption from Hong Kong, while many birth parents did not have the choice to raise their children, some saw U.S. adoption as the best option for providing their children a good education and a better future. Emphasizing the fictive nature of family formation through adoption and highlighting the element of choice in this process challenge the assumption that all birth parents were socially dead and provides a lens through which to examine how power was performed both by political entities and individuals.[11]

My second overarching objective is to treat transnational adoption in different time periods as an essential part of Chinese immigration history. I see paper children as de facto adoptees of their paper families and adoptees who entered later as immigrants. Positioning adoption in the framework of immigration is significant in several ways. First of all, it stresses that there is no clear-cut division between immigrants and adoptees. Paper children immigrants entered the United States through a form of de facto adoption, and some paper sons conveniently used the term "adopted sons" to denote their relationship with their paper families and legitimize their immigration. In post-1990s adoption, many children were not abandoned by their birth parents, but were snatched away by birth-planning officials and were reproduced as "orphans" by state-run orphanages which fabricated evidence of their abandonment so that the children could be made adoptable. In other words, some Chinese children were made into what Jodi Kim calls

[11] The concept of birth parents as social dead is from Jodi Kim. See Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 169.

the "paper orphans."[12] The paper-children immigrants and paper-orphan adoptees thus are surprisingly alike. While contemporary Chinese adoptees gain citizenship upon adoption, a privilege conventional immigrants cannot enjoy, they have to "meet the requirements applicable to adopted children under immigration law."[13] That is, the adoptees are granted citizenship precisely because of their status as immigrants.

I thus challenge the dichotomy often constructed by many adoptive parents between Asian/Chinese immigrants as unassimilable, undesirable outsiders and adoptees as assimilable members of white families and U.S. national body. My analysis unsettles this immigrant-adoptee dichotomy and demonstrates that contemporary Chinese adoptees, primarily female, are often racialized either as visitors to, rather than members of, the white families, or their adoptive father/male sibling's "Asian mate[s]," sexualized and exoticized in the same way as conventional Asian women immigrants have been.[14] By breaking the dichotomy, my research reveals that, on the one hand, Asian immigrants are perpetually racialized as unassimilable and undesirable outsiders to U.S. national body. On the other hand, many white adoptive parents view their adopted children through a color-blind lens by erasing the adoptees' status as nonwhite immigrants. These parents exemplify a group of white people who, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva observes, see "only people" but "not any color" and to whom, race or racial discrimination no longer matter in deciding inequalities of minorities.[15] Therefore, the immigrant-adoptee dichotomy held by these parents and the color-blind ideology behind it renders the racism, both adoptees and conventional Asian immigrants often encounter on a daily basis, invisible to these parents.

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[12] Kim, *Ends of Empire*, 187.
[13] U.S. Department of Justice, "The Child Citizenship Act of 2000," accessed October 5, 2017, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/pressrelease/ChildCitizenshipAct_120100.pdf.
[14] Anna Eldridge, "The Hardest Part about Growing Up as a Transracial Adoptee," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anna-eldridge/the-hardest-part-about-growing-up-as-a-transracial-adoptee_b_6679352.html. Accessed on Jan. 17, 2016. The concept of "perpetual children" can be seen in the adoptee anthology *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype*. See Christian, Diane Rene and Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston, *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype.* ed. (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 15.
[15] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanhan, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 1-3.

Moreover, this framework foregrounds a historical continuity between paper children immigration/adoption and transnational adoption of Chinese orphans during and after the Cold War. Birth parents in paper children immigration/adoption during the Exclusion Era and some in Cold War adoption from Hong Kong sent their children to the United States for the purpose of immigration. This continuity also illustrates the history of transnational adoption from China from 1882 to the present as the history of U.S. capitalism and informal imperialism in China that "pulled" both paper son adoptees to fill the labor market and post-1990s adoptees to fill the adoption market. This history produced a powerful discourse of the United States as a promised land that encouraged Chinese people to send children to the United States.[16] In addition, we see that paper children immigrants and contemporary adoptees share similar sentiments and predicaments of being stuck between two families and two countries and suffer from the same loss of roots and identity.

While viewing adoptees as immigrants, I also address the specificities of adoption, especially post-1990s adoption, that distinguish it from conventional immigration. First of all, unlike conventional immigrants who maintain social, familial, and legal ties with their families in home countries, legally adoptable children usually have to be orphans. Also, compared with conventional immigration, transnational adoption is far more complex because they are based on narratives of abandonment and of rescue that are often interwoven with the realities of baby commodification due to the high demand from Western adoption market. Moreover, unlike conventional immigration in which settlement patterns and family formation occur within racial/ethnic communities, transnational adoption involves transracial family formation, or what Catherine Ceniza Choy labels as "global family formation," thus functioning as "a powerful way to imagine contemporary U.S. multiculturalism."[17] The multicultural, multiracial global family formation is particularly salient in post-1990s adoption in which most Chinese orphans were

[16] The concept of U.S. capitalism as both pulling and pushing forces borrowed from Sucheng Chan. See her book *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 9.
[17] Choy, *Global Families*, 9.

adopted by middle-class, white families. Chinese adoptees thus help sustain the ideal U.S. nuclear family.

Furthermore, as Dorow observes, many white American adoptive parents prefer to adopt from China because although these babies are non-white, they are also non-black.[18] In other words, Chinese adoptees fit into the U.S. racial landscape by mediating the white-black binary.[19] Finally, contemporary Chinese adoptees usually gain automatic citizenship upon adoption, according to the 2000 Child Citizenship Act, and economic protection from their white middle-class adoptive families. As David Eng observes, post-1990s adoption from China has become "one of the late twentieth century's most privileged forms of immigration."[20] Therefore, my dissertation joins in the scholarship of transnational adoption from China by presenting a nuanced, complicated picture that both attends to specificities of adoption and foregrounds it as a fictive form of kinship formation and an important part of Chinese immigration history.

Methods and Theories

As an interdisciplinary project, my dissertation combines American Studies, China studies, adoption studies, and women's studies. I analyze a wide range of cultural texts from the United States from the Exclusion Era to the present, Hong Kong in the early Cold War, and China since the 1990s. I look into U.S. newspapers, both national and local, and the documentaries *The Dying Rooms* (1995) and *Return to The Dying Rooms* (1996) produced by British filmmakers but widely circulated in America, white adoptive parents' nonfictional writings, such as Karin Evans's memoir *The Lost Daughters of China* (2000) and children's picture books narrating adoption from China. To bring in an alternative adoption narrative, I analyze the works of two Chinese American writers— Fae Myenne Ng's novel *Bone* (1993) and Gish Jen's novel *The Love Wife* (2005)— to explore how these works challenge and complicate the dominant discourses

[18] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 47.
[19] David Eng argues how Chinese adoptees mediate the U.S. domestic white-black racial binary, See Eng, "Transnational Adoption and Queer Disaporas," *Social Text* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 11. Sara Dorow also observes that many white American adoptive parents prefer to adopt from China because although they are non-white, they are also non-black. See Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 212.
[20] Eng, "Transnational Adoption and Queer Disaporas," 7.

created by U.S. mainstream cultural texts. I also examine Hong Kong newspapers that reported adoption of Chinese orphans in the 1950s and 1960s as well as Colonial governmental documents concerning Chinese refugees and adoption. From the China side, I analyze two television programs, *News 1+1* in 2009 and the *Ethic Review* in 2016, both of which focus on adoptees' heritage tours and were aired on China Central Television Station (CCTV), one of the key mouthpieces of the Chinese government. I also examine investigative reports published in some newspapers and magazines, such as the *Economic Observer* and the *Caixin Century Weekly*, on the 2005 baby buying and selling scandal in Hengyang, Hunan Province.

My dissertation also pays attention to adoptees' narratives. I examine paper children's oral histories collected from the Angel Island Oral History Project, conducted by Judy Yung, Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim and other researchers from 1975 to the early 2000s. For narratives of contemporary adoptees, I use their blog postings to demonstrate that they share experiences and sentiments similar to those of paper children immigrants/adoptees and challenge adoption narratives constructed by U.S. media and white adoptive parents.

Methodologically, I have been inspired by Jodi Kim's approach to Asian American cultural texts about the Cold War in Asia. Kim approaches the Cold War not simply as "a historical epoch or event," but more importantly as "a geopolitical, cultural, and epistemological project of gendered racial formation and imperialism undergirding U.S. global hegemony."[21] Likewise, I approach transnational adoption from China not solely as a phenomenon, but more as a project in which certain discourses and narratives are produced. Put another way, I demonstrate that transnational adoption in different time periods functions as a site of contestation of representations and contestation of power. For instance, Cold War adoption from Hong Kong served as an instrument for U.S. anti-Communist cultural politics and a platform of rivalry between U.S. hegemony and British empire. Likewise, post-1990s adoption became a media battlefield in which the U.S.-led Western media formed a powerful discourse to condemn China

[21] Kim, *Ends of Empire*, 4.

as systematically and intentionally neglecting orphans in state-run orphanages and in which the Chinese media constructed China as an open, modern, positive, and responsible nation.

I examine these cultural texts by using Stuart Hall's "constructionist approach," with Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and of power as its core. According to Hall, social actors utilize "conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about the world meaningfully to others."[22] Foucault's concept of discourse is a system of thoughts or statements that provides a language with which to discuss a particular topic, and discourse decides what topic can be discussed, how it can be discussed, and what topics should be prohibited. Discourse is closely related to power relations. According to Foucault, it does not "translate struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle[.] [D]iscourse is the power that is seized."[23] But the Foucauldian sense of power relations is not centralized, stabilized, and hierarchical; rather, power functions as a dispersed force among individuals and members of different social groups, and it can be positive and productive.[24]

My project pays attention to how dominant discourses have been constructed by mainstream society as well as the dynamic power relations between the dominant and the subaltern. For instance, the ideology of American family being purely white was the very foundation on which the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, as Catherine Lee has forcefully argued.[25] However, Chinese immigrants took advantage of the ideological emphasis placed on family reunification in the immigration policy, through which they entered, primarily as paper children/de facto adoptees, and formed families. Similarly, in Cold War adoption from Hong Kong, some Chinese birth families turned adoption into an alternative means of immigration for their children. In other words, in both periods, while powerful discourses about paper

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[22] Hall, "The Work of Representation," 25.
[23] Ibid, 53.
[24] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interview and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 72, 207, 119.
[25] Catherine Lee, *Fictive Kinship: Family Reunification and the Meaning of Race and Nation in American Immigration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2013), 11.

children/transnational adoption were produced in U.S. and Hong Kong dominant societies, paper children/birth families exercised their power to resist or circumvent the exclusion acts and to create ways to allow themselves/their children to enter the United States.

While demonstrating the power of discourses produced by mainstream U.S., Hong Kong, and Chinese media representations, my dissertation also pays attention to what falls outside the dominant discourses. For instance, during the Exclusion Era, a discourse about Chinese immigrants, especially paper children, being illegal was so powerful that Chinese immigration historians seldom question this assumption, even as they critique the institutionalized exclusion that created such illegality.[26] However, paper children's de facto adoptive relationships with their paper families were legal and certified by the Immigration Service. In other words, the dominant discourse of paper children as illegal immigrants masks their legality as U.S. citizens.

Besides U.S., Chinese, and Hong Kong dominant discourses, this project pays attention to what Raymond Williams calls "alternatives." As Williams argues, no dominant culture can exhaust the full range of human practice, energy, and intentions, and there are always sources for alternatives, either in the form of an emerging class or as new practices excluded by the dominant culture.[27] I take Jen's novel *The Love Wife* and contemporary adoptees' blog writings as alternative narratives to complicate and/or challenge those created by the Western media and white adoptive parents. I also bring forth Chinese investigative reports on the 2005 Hengyang baby buying and selling scandal to unsettle both the narrative of rescue constructed in U.S. media and that of "big love beyond borders" in Chinese mainstream television programs.

My dissertation also draws upon Amy Kaplan's idea of "manifest domesticity" and Chandra Talpade Mohanty's transnational feminism to interrogate how images of women, both white adoptive parents in the Cold War adoption and Chinese birth mothers in post-1990s

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[26] See both Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 223-243 and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 56-90.

[27] Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Selected Essays) (Verso Editions and NLB: 1980), 37-38, 41.

adoption, were constructed. Kaplan argues that in the period of U.S. continental expansion between the 1830s and 1850s, American women functioned as "the engine of national expansion, the site from which the nation reaches beyond itself through the emanation of women's moral influence."[28] Under this framework, I demonstrate how white middle-class housewives played a central role in Cold War cultural politics as adoptive mothers embracing Chinese orphans. I also utilize Mohanty's criticisms of the U.S.-based, First World feminist gaze upon Third World women. Published in 1986, Mohanty's criticism in her article "Under Western Eyes" —that the Western feminist discourse treats Third World women as ahistorical, passive victims with singular, monolithic, and reductive image of the "Third World difference" —still applies to the feminist adoption narratives which construct Chinese birth mothers as passive, silent, powerless victims.[29] However, under the context of global capitalism, Chinese birth mothers are no longer "under Western eyes," as Mohanty forcefully argue in her "Under Western Eyes Revisited" published in 2003, but "'under and inside the hegemonic spaces" of the First World or what she now calls One-Third World. The adoptive mothers who have constructed adoption narratives with feminist concerns now turn into "feminist[s] as international consumer[s]" in the transnational adoption market, yet the static, monolithic image of Chinese women remains unchanged.[30] Mohanty's criticisms provide a particularly useful framework through which to analyze adoption narratives constructed by white adoptive mothers.

This project is situated in the intersection of race, gender, class, family, nation, as well as U.S. hegemony and British empire-building in Asia. In particular, my analysis foregrounds race and gender. As Choy argues, race is "fundamental to understanding demographics, discourses, and institutions" of Asian transnational adoption history and the experiences of Asian adoptees.[31]

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[28] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire: In the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2002), 29, 42, 43.
[29] Chandre Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Feminist Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.
[30] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Signs* 28, no.2 (Winter 2003), 516, 518.
[31] Choy, *Global Families,* 11.

Gender is also highlighted in this project because transnational adoption from China is a gendered project: the majority of paper children immigrants/adoptees and Cold War adoptees, as most went into Chinese American families, were boys; but post-1990s adoptees, however, are primarily girls. Moreover, adoption narratives constructed by the U.S. media and white adoptive parents have produced knowledge about China and Chinese women and girls through a predominantly Orientalist gendered and raced lens.

Literature Review and Interventions

My research is both indebted to and departs from current scholarship on paper children and transnational adoption. Chinese American historians have produced a rich scholarship on paper children. While Erika Lee, Estelle T. Lau, and Madeline Hsu argue that Chinese immigrants and immigration officials co-created paper children immigration, Kenneth Chew, Mark Leach, and John M. Liu focuses on how under high demand for Chinese laborers in U.S. domestic labor market, a "revolving door system" was formed to renew Chinese American communities with young paper son laborers.[32] Catherine Lee, however, turns to family reunification provisions in immigration policies and contends that although the ideology of the ideal U.S. white family was the very basis on which the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, Chinese immigrants utilized these provisions in immigration policies as a loophole to enter as paper sons.[33] While drawing upon previous research, my analysis of paper children also departs from it by viewing paper children as de facto adoptees. I challenge the assumption that all Chinese immigrants during the Exclusion era were illegal. Overemphasis on their illegality as fake children of their paper families is problematic in that it legitimizes only the natural, blood relationship between parents and children and precludes other possibilities of forming parent-child relationships.

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[32] Erika Lee. *At America's Gates*; Madeline Hsu's *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000); Estelle T. Lau, *Paper Families*: *Identity, Immigration Administration, and Chinese Exclusion*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Lee, *Fictive Kinship*; Kenneth Chew, Mark Leach, and John M. Liu. "The Revolving Door to Gold Mountain: How Chinese Immigrants Got Around US Exclusion and Replenished the Chinese American Labor Pool, 1900–19101," *International Migration Review* 43, no. 2 (2009): 410-430.

[33] Catherine Lee. *Fictive Kinship,* 67, 72.

My research on Cold War adoption from Hong Kong is inspired by but differs from Choy's research. Cold War adoption from Hong Kong has long been overshadowed by mixed-race adoption from Japan, Korea, and Vietnam and adoption from mainland China since the 1990s. Based on ISS-USA archives, Choy has unearthed this part of history and argues that transnational adoption was a form of "global family" formation.[34] I illustrate, however, that adoption was not only about "global family" formation, but functioned as a site of power contestations through which different parties—the United States, the British Colonial government, and Chinese birth parents—made meanings for their own purposes.

There is abundant research on adoption from China since the 1990s, but most of it is conducted using the methods of sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Most scholars, such as Toby Alice Volkman as well as Richard Tessler, Gail Gamache and Liming Liu, touch upon the causes of girl-abandonment and the plight of Chinese parents under the birth-planning policy but focus on concerns of adoptive parents.[35] Kay Johnson is the only scholar who is engaged in China's domestic adoption. She finds that contemporary Chinese people increasingly value daughters and a large number of abandoned girls have been adopted domestically.[36] Sara Dorow's research on the cultural economy in adoption from China is especially illuminating to this project. As the only research focusing on commodification of Chinese orphans, Dorow investigates how market forces and practices "contribute to the production of kinship," in which process, raced, gendered, and classed discourse was created and circulated.[37] I extend her argument by showing that the high visibility of adoption from China resonated with the rise of

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[34] Choy, *Global Families*, 66.

[35] Toby Alice Volkman, for instance, argues that U.S. adoptive parents' "fascination with the imagined birth culture" of their Chinese adoptees represents "a displaced longing for origins and the absent birth mothers." SeeVolkman, "Embodying Chinese Culture: Transnational Adoption in North America," *Social Text* 21, no. 1, (Spring 2003): 29-30. Besides Volkman, Richard Tessler, Gail Gamache and Liming Liu as well as Jay W. Rojewski and Jacy L. Rojewski also focus on adoptive parents' post-adoption concerns, such as their children's bi-cultural socialization, adjustment, and identity formation in America. Richard Tessler, Gail Gamache, and Liming Liu, *West Meets East: Americans Adopt Chinese Children* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin & Garvey, 1997).

[36] Kay Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son: Abandonment, Adoption, and Orphanage Care in China* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Yeong & Yeong Book Company, 2004),107-8.

[37] Dorow's major argument is that stories of adoption from China are told in the tropes of client, gift, and ambassador and that adoption poses impossible contradictions of belonging, but her discussion of commodification of Chinese orphans partly inspired my association of "babies made in China" and "products made in China." See Dorow, *Transnational Adoptions,* 25, 69-83.

China's image as the world factory, and that the narrative of "babies made in China" was interwoven with the narrative of "products made in China."

Only several scholars, such as Lisa Cartwright and Elizabeth Alice Honig, pay attention to a few cultural texts representing adoption from China.[38] However, numerous cultural texts—in various forms, such as documentaries, fictions, children's picture books, and memoirs—on adoption from China exist in America, especially those created by white adoptive parents as cultural producers of adoption narratives. By examining these texts and putting them into dialogue with each other, I interrogate what meanings are constructed in these texts and how cultural representations shaped the image of China and Chinese people as well as of the United States.

Another under-researched area is the voices of adult and youth Chinese adoptees. The only works that pay attention to their voices are Andrea Louie's ethnographic study in her new book *How Chinese Are You?* and adult Chinese adoptee Isabelle St. Clair's research on adoptee narratives based on her interviews with fellow Chinese adoptees. Although still focusing on adoptive parents, Louie interrogates how the adoptees invented and reinvented multi-layered, multi-dimensional identities in the United States.[39] St. Clair, like my Chapter Seven, demonstrates how adoptees provide counternarratives to the dominant adoption narratives created by U.S. media and adoptive parents, but she is more engaged in showing how adoptees articulate a sense of "belonging, authenticity, and community."[40] Departing from them, I break the immigrant-adoptee dichotomy constructed by many adoptive parents by analyzing Chinese

[38] Cartwright traces how *Human Rights Watch* (1996) and TV programs like *The Dying Rooms* (1995) and *Return to the Dying Room* (1996) generated a wave of compassion and pity in the Western world towards Chinese orphans. See Lisa Cartwright, "Images of 'Waiting Children': Spectatorship and Pity in the Representation of the Global Social Orphan in the 1990s," in *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, ed. Toby Alice Volkman (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 185-212. Honig analyzes travel books and photographs of adoption journey and cultural camps, arguing that by using the "what if" narrative (such as "What if my child had stayed in their original country?"), adoptees adjust and redefine their identity, and adoptive parents justify their participation in adoption. See Elizabeth Alice Honig, "Phantom Lives, Narratives of Possibility," in *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, ed. Toby Alice Volkman (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 213-222.

[39] Andrea Louie, *How Chinese Are You: Adopted Chinese Youth and Their Families Negotiate Identity and Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015).

[40] Isabelle St. Clair, "Being-in-Between: Narratives of Identity and Community by Chinese American Adoptees" (MA Thesis, Wellesley College, 2017), 16.

adoptee blog narratives and demonstrate that adoptees share similar predicaments of displacement, of loss, of being strangers in their own families with paper children immigrants/de facto adoptees, as well as other racial, cultural, ethnic issues faced by conventional immigrants.

Chapter Outline:

My dissertation is organized in a roughly chronological order and juxtaposes historically contextualized analysis of newspaper archives and paper children's oral histories with literary reading of novels, picture books, memoirs, and blog articles. In the historical chapters, my focus is less on presenting historical facts about adoption than on demonstrating how different parties in different periods have produced meanings through cultural representations. In short, I treat all the primary sources, including those commonly viewed as historical archives, as narratives that are "constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive."[41]

Chapters One and Two focus on paper children immigration as de facto transnational adoption. By examining paper children's oral histories, I demonstrate in Chapter One how paper children immigration was rooted in, borrowed from, and modified the Chinese practice of adoption in feudal China and displayed Chinese immigrants' resilience and creativity in forming "fictive kinship" and making families that blurred the line between blood and paper relationships. By reading Fae Myenne Ng's novel *Bone*, Chapter Two extends my argument in Chapter One by demonstrating that paper son Leon's immigration paper generated a psychological bond with his paper/de facto adoptive father that profoundly affects his whole life and his family. It shapes his identity as a paper son and the identity of his descendant, Leila, and becomes a legacy that she can pass down to future generations. These two chapters work together to argue against U.S. dominant discourse that views paper children's immigration papers as fake and functioning only for immigration. On the contrary, these papers continued to generate influence long after paper children's entry into the United States.

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[41] Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: SAGE publications, 1993), 5.

Chapter Three turns to adoption from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. Through a comparative reading of U.S. and Hong Kong newspapers, I display how adoption served as a site of power contestations between U.S. new hegemony and Britain the old empire as represented, at least partly, by the Colonial government. Some Chinese birth parents, together with Chinese American adoptive parents, also joined in the power contestations by turning adoption into an alternative path to immigration through which their children could be sent to America for a better life.

Chapters Four through Seven focus on U.S. adoption from China since the 1990s. Chapter Four analyzes both U.S.-led Western and Chinese mainstream media representations and Chinese investigative reports as an alternative narrative. While the Western media represented China as the callous Communist "human rights offender" that systematically and intentionally neglected institutionalized orphans, Chinese media constructed the narratives of "beauty of humanity" and of "big love beyond borders" that foregrounded China and individual Western adoptive parents as co-creators of the "big love" but removed traces of the United States and other Western receiving countries. These narratives, however, were disrupted by the Chinese investigative reports of the 2005 Hengyang scandal, which represented transnational adoption as a monetary transaction between the orphanages and Western adoptive parents.

In Chapter Five and Six, I conduct literary analysis on adoption narratives. Chapter Five discusses fairy tales and narratives with imagination of birth mothers, created by white adoptive parents as cultural producers who actively participate in knowledge production about China, Chinese people, as well as the United States and themselves. In the fairytale narratives, adoption is represented as a story of love, rescue, and "from rags to riches," in which a binary is constructed between a free, affluent America as the provider of permanent homes and humanitarian care-giver for Chinese orphans and an ahistorical, premodern, patriarchal, feminized China as the producer of abandoned girls and oppressor of Chinese women. These writings are loaded with feminist concerns over birth mothers who are constructed as passive,

oppressed victims whose only choice was to relinquish their babies and whose only agency was to act as collaborators in their children's adoption. These narratives are challenged and complicated by Gish Jen's novel *The Love Wife*, which I analyze in Chapter Six. I show how Jen refutes adoption from China as a story of rescue and a fairy tale in which adoptees live happily ever after, denaturalizes motherhood based on adoption as well as on the same race/ethnicity, and gives agency to a Chinese female character whose presence in a middle-class American adoptive family invokes the Chinese birth mother.

Chapter Seven analyzes contemporary Chinese adoptees' blogs. I break the immigrant-adoptee dichotomy by revealing that adoptees share similar experiences and sentiments with conventional immigrants, especially paper children immigrants/de facto adoptees, and are often treated by the U.S. public as racialized, sexualized, and exoticized Others. The blog narratives also challenge the notion of naturalized kinship between adoptive parents and adoptees as constructed by white adoptive parents by exposing adoptees' perceptions of feeling like strangers in their white families and outsiders in white communities.

CHAPTER 1

Paper Children Adoption and Negotiation of Immigration in the Exclusion Era

Like most male Chinese immigrants who entered the United States during the Chinese Exclusion Era, David Der came as a paper son. His grandfather first came to the U.S. as a diplomat to settle disputes between different benevolent associations or tongs (which formed the "Six Company") in San Francisco, and took two of the eleven sons born from his two wives as his assistants. When he returned to China, he left the two sons in the United States. They later managed to help their brothers and step-brothers immigrate to the United States as paper sons—a term for immigrants who entered with counterfeit papers, often purchased, that established their status as children of U.S. citizens of Chinese descent or of exempt classes. Now a medical doctor in Oakland, CA, Der arrived in 1939 with his uncle's wife as his paper mother, who was forced by his grandmother to take him with her. "I knew my grandmother made her take me over as her son but she made sure that I was not her real son after we came over. I did not really have a home, as I was shifted from one uncle to another during my early years here in the United States," Der recalled in an interview conducted by the Oakland Chinatown Oral History Project.[1] Der later joined the U.S. army during WWII. With the benefits from the GI Bill, he was able to earn his medical degree from Howard University, and became an influential surgeon and community leader in Oakland Chinese American community. On the "local heroes" page on the website of the Federation of Chinese American and Canadian American Medical Societies, he claimed that he was "an adopted son" of his uncle and aunt (his uncle's wife).[2]

His claim obscures the line between paper sons and adopted sons. While it is likely that he felt it was inappropriate to expose his paper son immigration experience on a professional webpage since paper sons are usually associated with illegal immigration, his claim reveals how

[1] Oakland Chinatown Oral History Project, "Dr. David Der Oral History," Interviewed by Eric and Tiffany Chan on June 27, 2007, a project of Oakland Asian Cultural Center (2008), 16.
[2] Federation of Chinese American and Chinese Canadian Medical Societies, "Doctor David F. Der," accessed May 20, 2016, http://fcmsmd.org/local-heroes/oakland/dr-david-f-der/.

paper sons were in essence adopted sons. Indeed, in his oral history, Der remembers that before his immigration, he had been assigned by his grandmother to be son of this uncle and aunt, who had no children of their own. Without doing so, his aunt could not come to America. He then lived with his aunt for almost half a year as her de facto adopted son and learned to call her "mother."[3] Der's experience of "being assigned to be son" of his uncle and aunt both resembles and modifies the practice of heir adoption in China that existed prior to 1950, when it was abolished by the newly founded People's Republic. As we shall see in this chapter, in feudal China—which refers to the era between 475 B.C. with the beginning of the warring periods and 1911 with the end of last Qing dynasty—when a man could not produce his own heir, he adopted within his agnation, and the adoption was often decided by the oldest generation in the family. However, Der was not adopted to inherit his uncle's title and property, but rather to help his uncle's wife immigrate to America so that his uncle's family, which had been separated by the exclusion acts, could be reunified. Paper son immigration/adoption thus became a vehicle through which Chinese barred by the exclusion acts could enter the country and immigrant families separated by the acts could be reunified.

Der's story offers a window through which we can look into the issue of paper son immigration/adoption during the Exclusion Era. Adoption can be defined as the process through which a parent-child relationship is established between individuals who are not related by blood. I use the term "paper children immigration/adoption" because paper children immigrated by creating non-blood parent-child relationship within their "paper families" (borrowing Estelle T. Lau's term).[4] This chapter situates paper children immigration (of primarily paper sons and a few paper daughters) in the framework of adoption, and examines how the paper children system was rooted in, borrowed from, and modified the Chinese practice of adoption in feudal China.

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[3] Der did not mention in his oral history why his aunt could not enter without him acting as her son. It is likely that during the Exclusion Era when women were often rejected by immigration officers who perceived them as prostitutes unless proved otherwise, a woman with a child might reduce her possibility of being viewed as such, and thus increasing her probability of entering the country. See "Dr. David Der Oral History," 14.

[4] Lau, *Paper Families*.

As I discuss in detail in this chapter, there are many similarities between the Chinese practice of adoption and paper children immigration. Nevertheless, no current research explores the relationship between the two. There are several reasons for this. First, paper children have long been considered by U.S. mainstream society as illegal immigrants, while adoptees from China, especially the post-Cold War ones, are usually viewed as assimilable members of adoptive families. The public discourse on paper children often viewed them as impostors by emphasizing their original identities and negating their legal, paper identities. In contrast, the term "transnational adoptees" is often applied to those who entered the country through adoption by American citizens, and the term emphasizes their legitimate adopted identity. In other words, paper children and adopted children are positioned in a dichotomy such that the former are illegal while the latter are legal. Second, very seldom did paper children consider themselves as adoptees in their paper families. Rather, most deemed their paper identities as "fake" or "falsified," indicating that for many paper children, immigration to the United States was the sole purpose of the fictive identity. Third, most were not legally adopted by their paper families.

I argue, however, that paper children immigration generated de facto adoptive relationship between paper children and their paper families. I will first present a socio-historical background of paper children immigration to argue that the most important reasons behind the wide application of this practice were not only U.S. informal imperialism and semi-colonization of China but also the influence of the practice of adoption in feudal China. While the former created the "pull" from the U.S. domestic labor market to attract paper sons as young workers, the latter provided the social context in which most Chinese immigrants came through the paper children practice. I then trace the history of adoption practice in feudal China and, through a close reading of paper children's oral histories, I examine how the practice that created paper children resembled yet modified and complicated the Chinese practice of adoption. By doing so, I reveal the resilience of Chinese immigrants in not only navigating the Chinese exclusion acts designed to bar them from entering the United States, but also in creating "fictive kinship" and forming

families mixed with both blood and non-blood parent-child relationships. Last, I demonstrate the various ways that paper children negotiated their identities, and argue that while U.S. mainstream society labeled them as illegal immigrants, and some paper children internalized the idea of themselves as such, others either embraced their paper identities or create new identities out of their paper ones.

This chapter analyzes historical archives—primarily oral histories, with a few immigration files— not only as factual records but as cultural representations. I contend that these archives are not so much facts with historical accuracy as narratives constructed about paper children's experiences and life stories. As Benson Tong argues, one limitation of oral histories is that "human memory is fallible, and as such, recollections are sometimes inaccurate or incomplete."[5] Likewise, immigration files contain pages of interrogations that were full of immigration officials' prejudices and immigration applicants' stories woven to match the records left by earlier immigrants, usually their (paper) families. Besides these archives, I also read two paper sons' memoirs, Tung Pok Chin's *Paper Son: One Man's Story* (2000) and Wayne Hung Wang's *American Paper Son: A Chinese Immigrant in the Midwest* (2006). Together, these sources present a rich collection of narratives through which I analyze the migration of paper children as part of transnational adoption from China during the Exclusion Era.

Paper Children Immigration in the Chinese Exclusion Era and After

Most Chinese immigrants who entered the United States during the Exclusion Era did so as paper children. Both immigrant officials and immigration historians estimate that during the Exclusion Era about 90 percent of Chinese immigrants, predominantly young and male, entered through the paper children practice.[6] This practice continued even after the repeal of the Chinese

[5] Benson Tong, "Appendix: Methodology" in *American Paper Son: A Chinese Immigrant in the Midwest* by Wayne Hung Wang (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 123.

[6] Erika Lee claims that both San Francisco immigration officials, for instance commissioner of immigration in 1909, Hart Hyatt North, and interviewees of Chinese detainees on Angel Island estimated that during the 1920s and 1930s, 90-95 percent of immigrants used fraudulent papers. See Lee, *At America's Gates*, 191. Madeline Hsu maintains that both immigration officials and Chinese themselves estimated that 90 percent of those who entered during the Exclusion Era used fake papers, see Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 68.

exclusion acts in 1943. By 1965, when the new Immigration Act repealed the national quota of 105, four or five generations of Chinese immigrants had entered the U.S. through the paper children network.[7]

As historians have argued, paper son immigration was the product of Chinese exclusion acts that barred most Chinese from entering the country. Erika Lee argues forcefully that Chinese immigrants and immigration officials co-created a system of illegal immigration and a thriving, profitable transnational business to facilitate illegal immigration during the Exclusion Era, within which the paper son system was particularly effective.[8] The paper son practice started in the 1880s with the passing of the Exclusion Act of 1882, when Chinese merchants, as an exempt class, brought over fictive sons. In the 1890s, Chinese immigrants began to take advantage of the14th amendment that granted the right of citizenship to anyone born in the United States, and the ruling of *United States v. Wong Kim Ark* in 1898 affirmed that "regardless of race, all persons born in the United States were native-born citizens of the United States and entitled to all of the rights that citizenship offered."[9] The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the subsequent fire that burned birth records in the City Hall further provided Chinese immigrants with a loophole through which to claim birth right and citizenship. Immigrants with fraudulent papers first came as returning native-born citizens, then as foreign-born children of citizens. In 1910, for example, of 2,109 Chinese immigrants entering the country, 2,096 claimed to be native-born citizens, and only 13 claimed to be foreign-born children of citizens. In 1921, however, among 3,493 who entered, 2,067 claimed to be foreign-born children of citizens.[10] Chinese immigrants experienced an extremely imbalanced sex ratio between men and women, and the anti-miscegenation laws were strictly enforced in some states—particularly California. As a result, many Chinese immigrants, usually male, chose to travel back to China multiple times. Returning to America, they reported to the Immigration Service their marriages with Chinese women and

[7] Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of God, Dreaming of Home*, 81.
[8] Lee, *At America's Gate*, 203.
[9] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 74; Lee, *At America's Gate*, 105.
[10] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 79-80.

sons born or wives' pregnancies during their stays. They often claimed more sons than they actually had or claimed sons when they had daughters, thus creating immigration slots for more paper sons to come as foreign-born children of U.S. citizens.

That counterfeit papers were most commonly used by Chinese immigrants during this period deserves our attention. To be sure, Chinese were not the only ethnic group that resorted to false papers. African Americans, for instance, turned to pseudo-brotherhood or kinship to seek financial assistance, and some Latin Americans used fraudulent marriages to circumvent the restrictive immigration law in the 1970s.[11] However, the term "paper immigrants" was almost completely reserved for Chinese immigrants. Estelle Lau attributes this phenomenon to the fact that the Chinese Exclusion Act was "the first exclusion of any racial group and lasted for the longest time," and accordingly the use of false papers among Chinese immigrants was the most "extensive."[12] Erika Lee explains that Chinese turned to the "crooked path" of illegal immigration, including paper immigration, because of poor economic conditions in China, the desire to join their families in the U.S., the zeal of the U.S. government to enforce the exclusion laws, the availability of jobs in the U.S., and "the ease with which the law could be evaded," meaning the loopholes Chinese could exploit for the purpose of immigration.[13]

In addition to these factors, I argue that other more important reasons prompted the practice of paper children among the Chinese. First, U.S. informal imperialism and semi-colonization in China created inequalities between the two countries, producing economic incentives for Chinese families to send their children to the United States as paper sons. Victoria DeGrazia's *Irresistible Empire* argues that the United States as the world's first "informal empire" exerted its influence by selling an attractive package of political peace, commercial prosperity and "material civilization."[14] Historians have also argued that informal imperialism in

[11] Peter S. Li, "Fictive Kinship, Conjugal Tie and Kinship Chain Among Chinese Immigrants in the United States," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, (Spring, 1977), 49.
[12] Lau, *Paper Families*, 37.
[13] Lee, *At America's Gate*, 191-192.
[14] Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge Mass.: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 2

Asia since the mid-19th century was evident not only in free trade and economic integration, but in the exploitation of Asian labor forces recruited to the United States and attracted by the idea that the United States was a promised land of economic prosperity.[15] In interviews conducted by the Angel Island Oral History Project from 1975 to the early 2000s, many paper sons attributed their desire to immigrate to the widely circulated myth that America was a "Gold Mountain"—a term often used by Chinese immigrants to refer to the United States. For instance, John F. Louie stated that people always described America as a place of "unlimited opportunities."[16] Mr. Quan also recalled, "All I knew was the gum-san-hock (or Gold Mountain guests) who went back were rich…that's why people spent all their money to get there[.] [T]hey'd spend up to 1,500 dollars to buy papers to come, thinking in a year or two they'd make it all back."[17]

The inequalities between the Western colonizers and China caused by Western semi-colonization and local warlords in China also created push forces among Chinese parents to send their male children to the United States primarily through the paper son system. The parents believed that doing so would either serve the best interest of their children or that the children would bring back wealth earned in the Gold Mountain. In their oral histories, many paper sons mentioned that it was usually their parents or grandparents who made the decision that these children would immigrate as paper sons. For instance, David Der recalled that his grandmother decided who would come to America. Another Angel Island detainee, William Wong, recounted in his oral history that his mother sent him to the U.S. to join his father, who "came as a son of native, but that was not true."[18] These stories reveal how paper sons were pushed by their (grand)parents. In this sense, the paper son immigration was very much like Cold War adoption

[15] This argument can be seen among Asian American scholars, such as Sucheng Chan's *This Bittersweet Soil* and Gary Y. Okihiro's *Margins and Mainstreams*. See Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil,* 37 and Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1994), 3-65.
[16] PRHC Angel Island Oral History Project, "Oral History with John F. Louie," interviewed by Jan Goggans in Sacramento, California, August 17-18, 2004, collected from the Office of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, March 29, 2006.
[17] Interview with Detainee at Angel Island, "Mr. Quan," interviewed by Genny Lim, Judy Yung, Him Mark Lai in San Francisco, California, August 29, 1976, collected from the Office of Angel Island Immigration Station, Foundation, March 29, 2006.
[18] Oakland Chinatown Oral History Project, "William Wong Oral History," Interviewed by Rose Huey in Piedmont, California, August 3, 2007, a project of Oakland Asian Cultural Center (2008), 2.

from Hong Kong, in which some birth parents saw adoption as a way to send their children, many of whom were male, to America, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Three.

Furthermore, the American domestic labor market during the Exclusion Era continued to "pull" young Chinese paper sons into the U.S. labor force. Erika Lee found that during the Exclusion Era, there was a paradox among politicians and immigration officials that while the supply of Chinese laborers was cut off, "the demand for immigrant labor in general was high." Although European, Mexican and other Asian immigrants continued to enter and fill the labor market, demand for Chinese laborers seemed as urgent as before, so much so that labor contractors told immigration officials that they would "put to work every Chinaman" they could find. According to Lee, labor demand, together with "Chinese desire to join family already in the country" as "a major incentive," caused Chinese male immigrants to enter the country by choosing the "crooked path," the paper son immigration.[19]

Research done by Kenneth Chew, Mark Leach, and John M. Liu further proves that paper son immigrants came to fill the labor market. Chew, Leach, and Liu maintain that the Chinese migration system during the Exclusion Era was a "revolving door system" that renewed Chinese American communities with young laborers who arrived "as replacements for departing older male workers." The researchers found that, rather than being made up of "aging bachelors," as depicted by conventional historiography, the male-dominated Chinese community during the 61 years of exclusion was "not so much aging as it was 'perpetually young.'" The 1880 census shows that the Chinese population consisted predominantly of males between 20 to 40 years old, the prime working ages. Presumably, during the Exclusion Era when Chinese laborers were barred from entry, the Chinese population should have aged accordingly. However, the 1900 census still showed that approximately 70 percent of the male population was between 20 to 49 years old, still the prime working age. They thus conclude that instead of dying out as expected by exclusionists, the Chinese communities "contrived, over a period of above 60 years, to

[19] Lee, *At America's Gate*, 191.

systematically replenish their labor forces."[20] It is likely that most of the young laborers came through the paper son system. In paper children's oral histories, all stated that they came at a young age to join the labor force. Most came in their teens or early twenties, but some came as young as six or eight years old. Although quite a few came for better education, most joined the labor force, working in laundries, restaurants, farmlands, or taking jobs "believed to be too dirty, dangerous, or degrading for white men and were paid on a separate and lower wage scale than whites."[21]

The third and the most decisive reason leading to the high percentage of paper children immigration among Chinese was that the widespread practice of adoption so deeply rooted in feudal China provided the social context and historical blueprint for paper children immigration. A close look at the practice of adoption in feudal China reveals strong similarities between it and the paper children system, as well as how the paper children immigration/adoption complicated and modified the Chinese adoption practice.

Adoption in Feudal China and its Modified Application in Paper Children Immigration

Adoption has a long history in China and was primarily male-centered with the purpose of maintaining the patrilineal, patriarchal social system. Although there were different types of adoption, *lisi* (立嗣, adopting an heir) or *guoji* (過繼, passing the heir) became the most important form of adoption. In this system, only a man who did not have a male heir could adopt one from his own kin, usually a son from his own generation, in the order of closeness in blood relations. In other words, his brothers' sons were the first priority, but if not available, those of his paternal cousins could be considered. The adoptive heir enjoyed all rights of a born son, inheriting family name, titles, if any, and property, but he also had the obligation of caring for the adoptive parents when they were old, and especially the obligation of burying them as a *xiaozi* (孝子, a filial son) when they passed away.[22]

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[20] Kenneth Chew, Mark Leach, and John M. Liu, "The Revolving Door to Gold Mountain," 410-430.
[21] Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angle Island: Immigration Gateway to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71.
[22] Sun Yurong and Han Wenqiang, *Hunyin Jiating Jicheng Faxue* 婚姻家庭繼承法學[The Science of Law on Marriage, Family,

Interestingly, although heir adoption was the key form of adoption and highly protected by the patriarchal society, it was also more flexible than other forms. For one thing, the adoptive heir did not completely eliminate his relations with his birth parents, and still undertook the responsibility of caring for them.[23] For another, the legal adoptive relationship could be terminated under certain circumstances, after which he could return to his birth family. There was also one type of heir adoption, called *jiantiao* (兼祧), which means the adopted son could keep his status as a born son and/or heir of his birth parents, while remaining the heir to his adoptive family. He could even marry in both families, and beget sons for both sides.[24]

In later centuries, the adoption system, as "an integral part" of marriage and kinship system, remained largely unchanged, although adoption laws witnessed formal changes with the overthrow of the last feudal dynasty and establishment of the Republic of China in 1911.[25] For instance, in 1930, Republican China ruled by the Nationalist Party issued a new law in which the heir-adoption system was abolished, although de facto heir adoption continued in China until 1950, when the newly established People's Republic of China passed a Marriage Law that completely abolished it.[26]

Other types of adoption coexisted with male heir adoption. These types included adopting a child out of gratitude, duty, or intimacy (for instance, adopting the child of a deceased friend or benefactor), and adopting through child purchase. Adoptees usually did not carry on family names of the adoptive families.[27] Girls could also be adopted, but often with the purpose of raising them as servants or as future daughters-in-law, or of selling them for concubinage,

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and Inheritance] ed. (Beijing: Beijing University of Technology, 2007), 7-8.

[23] Ibid., 183.

[24] Jiang Yue and He Lixin, *Hunyin Jiating Yu Jicheng Fa* 婚姻家庭與繼承法[Marriage, Family and Inheritance Law] (second version) (Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 2002), 244.

[25] The observation that adoption was an "an integral part of" marriage and kinship was made by Arthur P. Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang whose research focuses on different forms of marriage and adoption, as well as adoption with the purpose of marriage during the the last decades of Qing Dynasty and Republican period, a period that overlaps the Exclusion Era from 1882 to 1943. See Arthur P. Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1980), 117, 108.

[26] Jiang Yue and He Lixin, *Hunyin Jiating Yu Jicheng*, 245-246.

[27] Shi Fengyi, *Zhongguo Gudai Hunyin Yu Jiating* 中國古代婚姻與家庭[Marriage and Family in Ancient China] (Wuhan：Hubei People's Press, 1987), 184.

prostitution, or training for commercialized talent shows. The most common type of girl adoption was *tongyangxi* (童養媳, which literally means a girl taken into and raised up by a family as a future daughter-in-law) adoption. As historians have argued, the most important characteristic that differentiated *tongyangxi* adoption from other types of child marriages was the *tongyangxi's* "adoptive relationship" with her future husband's family.[28] Even with the purpose of marriage, the adopted daughter/future daughter-in law was often treated no better than a housemaid by the adoptive family.[29]

One important aspect in the practice of Chinese adoption was monetary compensation, which in most situations was paid by the adoptive families to the birth parents. While in some areas, Hai-shan for instance, compensation was not required when a child was taken for adoption from a recognized agnate, in others, one had to pay "a substantial sum of money" to the child's birth parents. If money was not a major concern for adoption between close relatives, adoption between parties of strangers or distant relatives were more of "a commercial transaction."[30]

Adoption in feudal China was a gendered and classed issue. While sons were primarily adopted for inheritance, if not out of gratitude, duty, or intimacy, daughters were typically adopted for sexual/marital purposes or household labor in accordance with values in feudal China that prioritized sons and devalued daughters. Monetary concerns were prominent in the process of adoption of both boys and girls. For male adoption, money was compensatory—paid by the adoptive family to compensate for taking the son from the birth family, but for female adoption, it was more of a commercial transaction. The Chinese practice of adoption also had a

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[28] A *tongyangxi* is widely considered as "being adopted" by the future husband's family in China, but this source is cited from Fang Jianxin 方建新, "Yetan Tongyangxi—Dui 'Tongyangxi Kaolue' Yiwen de Buzheng'也談童養媳—對《童養媳考略》一文的補正[Rearticulating Tongyangxi—Some Corrections on the Article of 'An Examination on Tongyangxi'], S*hehui* 社會[society], No.4 (1983), 57. Other sources include He Dinghua 何定華, "Tongyangxi Kaolue"童養媳考略[An Examination on Tongyangxi], *Shehui* 社會[Society], No. 1 (1983), 35, and Zhang Xiaoxia 張曉霞, "Qingdai Tongyangxi Xianxiang Tanxi: Yi Baixian Dangan Wei Zhongxin"清代童養媳現象探析: 以巴縣檔案為中心[An Examination on the Phenomenon of Tongyangxi in Qing Dynasty: Centering Upon Archives in Ba Country], ChengDu Daxue Xuebao 成都大學學報[*Journal of Chengdu University* (Social Science)], Serial No.171, No. 3, (June 2017), 59. Wolf and Huang's *Marriage and Adoption in China* and Kay Johnson's *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son* also view a *tongyangxi* as the adopted daughter of her future in-laws. See Johnson's *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son,* 7.

[29] Wolf and Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China*, 117, 239. Also see Shi Fengyi, *Zhongguo Gudai Hunyin Yu Jiating*, 184.

[30] Wolf and Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China*, 109-110.

class dimension, especially in female adoption. Usually it was poorer families who forsook daughters for adoption to richer families who could afford to raise the girls, for whatever purposes they might have. For instance, it was not uncommon to find poor parents who gave their daughters to richer families as future daughters-in-law (a practice called "minor marriages" in Wolf and Huang's term) for money in different regions of China.

The paper children immigration system in the Exclusion Era was rooted in and influenced by this history of adoption in China. First, like the heir adoption discussed above, paper son practice occurred primarily within agnate or extended families, and if there was no slot available, between friends or village people. Madeline Hsu's research on Chinese immigrants resulted in a similar finding that paper son immigration was usually conducted by "relatives, friends, mouth to mouth." Strangers could not be trusted to "sell paper identities that gave access to real slots."[31] When a paper son slot was created by one immigrant, it was most probably one of the sons of his brothers (and very rarely, his sisters) that would be chosen to fill it. A large number of paper sons interviewed mentioned that their paper fathers were their uncles. Although in Chinese kinship terms, "uncle" could mean the brother of either one's father or mother, it is likely that most uncles were paternal ones, since in the patriarchal Chinese clan system, married sisters always meant outsiders, and a paper son slot was usually a coveted opportunity that would be first used within the agnation. Many paper sons, therefore, did not need to change their family names since their paper fathers were their uncles. However, this does not mean that paper son slots were never sold to strangers. Actually, as the slot was often created with concrete information of the "son," including the exact year in which he was born, the slot did not always match the sons in one's extensive family or friends. In order not to waste a slot created in the immigration records years before actual immigration, and worth as much as $2,000, it was then sold to strangers. A transnational chain business made up of people looking for possible paper sons in China and those who gave professional testimonies in the immigration interrogations thus prospered.

[31] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 86.

Second, like Chinese heir adoptees, paper sons also inherited family names, responsibilities, obligations, and sometimes, properties of paper families. As noted, some paper sons did not need to change their family names, as their paper fathers were their uncles. Many others, however, had to take family names of their paper families and thus to give up their own. In addition to family names, many paper sons also had to carry on responsibilities for paper families, for instance, to provide for their paper parents in their old age. While some did so willingly, others did so only under duress. In his memoir, *Paper Son: One Man's Story*, Tung Pok Chin narrates how he was forced to provide for his paper mother. He immigrated to the United States in 1934 with the papers of a single man, although he was already married and had children in China. During WWII when he served as a U.S. Navy soldier, Chin was forced to give his monthly family subsidies provided by the Navy to his paper mother, who, according to his immigration paper, was his legal mother. Also because he was defined by his paper as "single," none of his original family left behind in war-stricken China —a mother, a wife, and two children—could get a penny.[32] Chin's narrative indicates that paper children, once admitted into the country, could only become legal beings in relation to their paper families; to their birth families, they were legally dead. Like adoptees in feudal China, they often had the legal responsibility of providing for their paper parents who, according to their immigration papers, were their only legal parents. Therefore, although a legal procedure of adoption seldom occurred between paper children and their paper families, the U.S. government legitimized the parent-child relationship documented between them.

Chin's story also reveals the third resemblance between paper children and adoptees in feudal China in that they did not completely cut off their relationships with original families while maintaining legal relationship with their paper families; instead, they often kept in touch with their original families, either economically or physically. Economically, most paper sons like Chin had to send remittances back to China since they entered the United States bearing the

[32] Tung Pok Chin and Winifred Chin, *Paper Son: One Man's Story* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 46.

hope of their birth parents that they would support the families they had left behind. Many paper sons also came to reunite with their birth family members, for instance, their birth fathers, who were already in the United States, though in a secretive way. Wayne Hung Wong narrates in his memoir, *American Paper Son: A Chinese Immigrant in the Midwest*, a complicated story in which he immigrated to the United States as a paper son to reunite with his birth father, who was also a paper son but could not bring him over by himself. Wong does not mention why his birth father had to buy "paper" for him, rather than bringing him over as his own son. It is possible that like Tung Pok Chin, his father immigrated as a single man, which means he could not leave any records in the Immigration Service about his children. Once he landed, Wong immediately reunited with his birth father and worked in the Chinese restaurant he was running. His paper father was a cousin of his birth father, and later worked in his birth father's restaurant with him as well. Therefore, Wong maintained the parent-son relationship with his paper father in public and with his birth father in private.

Like earlier Chinese adoption practices, the immigration of paper children was a gendered affair, exemplified by the stories of paper daughters. For some women, marriage became the only way that they could immigrate, though technically they still had to come as paper daughters due to the restrictions set by the 1924 Immigration Act. Although the Act had exemptions for U.S. citizens who wished to bring their foreign wives and minor children, the exemptions did not apply to Chinese, since they were "ineligible for citizenship" (a term primarily referring to Asians after the 1924 Immigration Act). This left the women who wanted to enter with no other choice but to come as paper daughters of exempt classes. In other words, like female adoption in feudal China that combined adoption with future marriage into adoptive families, some paper daughters' immigration was closely tied to their future marriage to someone in America. Born in 1908, Taishan, China, Mrs. Chan found herself both a picture bride and a paper daughter when she immigrated to San Francisco in 1926. When she graduated from a Christian school in Canton city, her father immediately found a husband for her in America. Like most picture brides from

Japan and Korea who entered before the 1924 Immigration Act forbade this type of immigration, Chan agreed to marry a man she knew only through a photograph. However, marriage alone could not guarantee her entry; she had to enter as a paper daughter. According to the paper, she was supposed to be an uneducated village girl, so on the ship and the Angel Island Immigration Station, she had to feign illiteracy by refraining from reading. From her oral history, it is hard to know why her father agreed to spend money for her immigration paper only after she agreed to marry, or whether her future husband shared the cost of her paper. It is certain, however, that like many girls in feudal China who were adopted as future brides, Chan gained the opportunity to enter the United States through a combination of adoption and marriage.

Nevertheless, not many women were as lucky as Chan. Lee Puey You's two immigration experiences first as a paper daughter and then as a paper wife, with the purpose of marrying the same person, Woo Tong, was, to her, a story with "a bowlful of tears." She was born in 1916. When she was twenty-three, her mother arranged a marriage for her so that she could come to the United States and hopefully bring the rest of her family over. In her first journey in 1939, she was detained on Angel Island for twenty months—"probably the longest stay of any Chinese detainee"—and was denied entry due to the discrepancies in her and her paper father's interviews. She was eventually deported back to Hong Kong, where she sold rice on the street to make a living. She was not allowed to marry in Hong Kong since her mother had "already promised [her] marriage to Woo Tong," and they had used some of Woo Tong's money. In 1947, Woo Tong went to Hong Kong, and invited her and her relatives for dinner, which was considered to be her marriage ceremony with him. Woo then arranged for her to immigrate to the United States again, this time as the war bride of a WWII veteran Sai Chan, who agreed to bring Lee over and return her to Woo Tong. In other words, Lee would enter as Sai Chan's paper wife then be reunited with Woo Tong.

However, her "marriage" to Woo Tong did not guarantee her entry in her first attempt to immigrate, or happiness in her second. After they got a marriage license, Sai Chan forced her to

have sex with him. Although immigration officials permitted her entry, Lee soon discovered that Woo Tong's wife was still alive, and that she was to be his concubine and his wife's domestic servant. After Woo Tong died, he left nothing to Lee and the daughter she had with him. She divorced Sai Chan in 1953 and married her second husband Fred Gin.[33] Like many other women who entered in the Exclusion Era, the only way for Lee Puey You to immigrate was through marriage. Yet her immigration based on marriage led to her being raped by her paper husband, exploited sexually by Woo Tong, and physically abused by his wife. Like many girls in the practice of Chinese adoption who were sold by their birth families as minor brides or housemaids of their adoptive families, Lee was "sold" to Woo Tong by her mother not only for money but for opportunities to immigrate to the United States for the rest of her family.

In the example of Lee Puey You, we see once again the similarity between female adoptees in feudal China and paper daughters in Chinese immigration. Compared with paper sons whose families in China were usually willing to buy papers for them to enter, even if incurring great debts for the families, paper daughters and wives paid for the right to immigrate with marriage, sex, or both. Birth families usually felt reluctant to pay for a daughter's immigration, because daughters would usually marry out of the families. Even worse, several paper daughters mentioned that although their birth fathers were already in the U.S. and were bringing their brothers over, they had been left behind because their birth parents had sold out the paper children slots created with immigration opportunities that might have fallen to them. As Erika Lee comments, with far more immigration slots available to males, the paper immigration system reflected the inequality in opportunities for immigration open to Chinese women.[34]

Paper children immigration/adoption was gendered not only in offering far fewer opportunities to Chinese women, but also in the double stigma these women had to bear as "fraud immigrants" and as sexually immoral beings. In 1955, two years after she married her

[33] Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910-1940* (second edition), ed., (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014), 330-338.
[34] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 206.

second husband, Lee Puey You still did not live the happy life she had dreamed of. Somebody reported her illegal entry to the INS and she was faced with the danger of being deported and separated from her husband and children. INS officer H.H. Engelskirchen ordered her deported based on the assertion that "her immigration visa has been procured by fraud" and that she had "an adulterous relationship with Woo Tong while still married to Sai Chan."[35] In other words, the INS found Lee Puey You, rather than the men who had sexually exploited her in the process of immigration, to be culpable. Moreover, the INS justified her deportation on the contradictory grounds that, on the one hand, her war marriage to Sai Chan was "fraud," and on the other, the marriage was valid, since Lee was "guilty" of adultery. This paradoxical judgment reflects how Chinese women immigrants in the Exclusion Era were faced with more treacherous situations than Chinese men in that they were viewed as not only fraudulent but also sexually promiscuous, a legacy from the racialization of Chinese women in the 1875 Page Act.

The stories of paper daughters, who came either for the purpose of marrying or reuniting with their husbands, or by means of marriage, demonstrate how coverture influenced Chinese (American) women. Because of coverture, "an Anglo-Saxon legal tradition that placed a woman's legal status under that of her husband," women's immigration status depended upon their husbands, until the mid-nineteenth century when coverture was abolished in the United States.[36] For Chinese women immigrants, however, coverture applied even after it no longer affected white women, because they had to enter as wives or daughters of male citizens or of men of exempt classes prior to the 1924 Immigration Act, and as merchants' wives or paper daughters after that. For U.S.-born Chinese women, marrying a foreign man was precarious since according to the 1907 Expatriation Act, American women who married alien men were stripped of their citizenship. Even after the 1922 Cable Act that granted women independent citizenship, racial restrictions still barred American women from marrying Asian men, who were considered

[35] Lai, Lim and Yung, *Island*, 337.
[36] Lee, *Fictive Kinship*, 16. Also see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 155.

"racially ineligible for citizenship." The laws thus made it virtually impossible for Chinese American women to bring any man over for the purpose of marriage.

Similar to adoption practices within China, monetary transactions occurred in paper children immigration; however, it was not the children themselves but rather the opportunities to immigrate and details about paper families that were commodified and traded. Such a difference reflects how inequalities between the sending country—China—and the receiving country—the United States—changed the monetary nature of the Chinese practice of adoption. As discussed above, in the practice of Chinese adoption, it was usually the adoptive family that paid the birth family, as compensation for giving up a child or as a commercial transaction, with the child being objectified as goods. In paper children immigration, however, the birth family not only had to forsake the child, who, upon entering the United States, would bear another family name and carry another identity, but also had to pay the paper family. In actuality, what was transacted was not the child, but the opportunity to become an American, a better place to survive, and for some paper sons, to have the United States as the terminus of immigration for other members of their original families. As Estelle Lau observes, in paper immigration, every detail of the immigration process, such as family photographs and doctor examinations, was commodified and sold for cash or credit.[37] Therefore, due to the economic and political inequalities between the United States and China and the myth that America was a promised land, the paper family's American citizenship and every piece of information about it were commodified and circulated transnationally.

Unlike the Chinese practice of adoption in which the child was the object of exchange, in paper children immigration, the paper child himself/herself (together with the original family) was the buyer. Once the paper child slot was bought, usually for one hundred U.S. dollars per year of the male slot (it is still unknown how much a female slot cost), the paper child and his/her birth family in China would receive detailed information about the paper family

[37] Lau, *Paper Families*, 65.

contained in the coaching book mailed to them or sent by returning Chinese. Once the paper child felt familiar enough with the coaching notes, he/she could start the journey to the United States. Besides the slot and the information, the money the birth family paid also included responsibilities from the paper family to provide witness when the paper child was to be interrogated by immigration officials once s/he arrived. Paper children immigration, therefore, was a transnational transaction.

In this sense, we see paper children immigration/adoption was not the simple extension of the Chinese adoption practice but was modified to suit the exclusive U.S. society. Compared with the practice of Chinese adoption, paper children immigration/adoption was also far more complicated. Asian American playwright Benjamin Choy's immigration story exemplifies such complexity. Choy was a renowned playwright, poet, and community activist for disabled people in San Francisco. He entered as a paper son in 1930 when he was only thirteen. His family in China purchased papers for him from his cousin, who actually had one son and one daughter but claimed to have two sons. Choy took the place of his cousin's daughter who was to be left behind in war-stricken China. Choy came with his paper brother, who was several years older but was supposed to be his younger brother, according to their immigration papers. After landing, he lived in Oakland with the cousin and his wife as his paper parents. They helped him enroll in a school to start his formal education. He eventually discontinued high school to work in order to pay off his debt, especially the one he owed his cousin for passage to the country.[38]

Choy's immigration story complicates our understanding of the practice of Chinese adoption in several ways. First, his relationship with his paper family was similar to an adoptee with his/her adoptive parents: he was treated like a son in this family, took the family name, lived with the family, and was sent to school. However, his paper father, though within his agnation, was actually someone of his own generation. Second, in order to match the age requirement set by the immigration records, his paper brother, who was several years older, had to become his

[38] Angel Island Oral History Project, "Interview with Ben Choy" by Caitin Fischer, December 2, 2004, collected from the Office of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, March 29, 2016.

younger brother. The paper son slot that Choy took thus skewed both the generation and sibling orders. Moreover, though treated like a son in the family, Choy's de facto adoption involved monetary compensation. Unlike the practice in China in which the adoptive family paid money to the birth family, Choy and his birth family had to pay to the paper family for the slot, his passage, and conceivably, accommodation and educational fees in America.

The daughter his cousin/paper father left behind in China also deserves discussion. She too eventually immigrated to America, but as someone else's daughter. In an interview conducted by the Angel Island Oral History Project, Choy explains why his paper parents created the opening for a paper son by reporting a son and leaving their daughter behind, "because, you know, [they] could sell the paper to make money, then bring their daughter with that money."[39] It is unknown why his paper parents sold the slot and looked for another paper for their daughter to enter rather than bring her over as their own. It was likely that paper son slots were far more expensive than paper daughter ones, since a common phenomenon in feudal China was to devalue daughters and value sons, so her parents could still profit even after spending for her immigration. More importantly, this case reflects a view commonly held by Chinese immigrants that maintaining the so-called "real" or blood relationship in families was not a major concern. If their daughters could immigrate—and conceivably, they could add some income to their families by selling a paper son slot—they would not mind their daughter turning into someone else's child.

With so many similarities between the Chinese adoption practice and paper children immigration, I view paper children as transnational adoptees. It is true that most paper children considered their relationship with their paper families only as economic transactions, and that they were not formally adopted by their paper families. However, the process of paper children immigration produced de facto non-blood parent-child relationships, and some paper children were indeed treated as adoptees by their paper families. Paper son Gin Shue's experience is a good case in point. Gin Shue was a foreign-born son of an American-born citizen, Gin Soo

[39] "Interview with Ben Choy."

Dung, who was married in China, fathered Gin Shue and died soon after. Without a father to attest to his legal status as an American citizen, Gin Shue's grandfather asked his old friend and kinsman Gin Ngok to bring Gin Shue over to the United States as his paper son. Gin Ngok attended to his task by elaborately creating a paper son slot specifically for Gin Shue. In 1919, Gin Shue successfully immigrated as the son of Gin Ngok. He lived with Gin Ngok, was given a formal education, and worked in Gin Ngok's grocery store. When Gin Ngok retired in 1922, he distributed the $4,000 holding in his grocery store equally between his birth son Gin Pok and paper son Gin Shue, which shows that "Gin Ngok may have looked upon Gin Shue as more than a paper son."[40] Gin Shue's story indicates that although he was not legally adopted, he was treated as an adoptee by his paper father, who not only created a paper son slot for him and brought him over, but also treated him equally as he treated his blood son. Gin Shue's story thus becomes a powerful example through which we see how some paper sons were actually de facto adopted sons.

Viewing paper children as adoptees, I also challenge the dichotomy between adopted children as legitimate and paper ones as illegal by demonstrating that one could be both a "paper child" and an "adopted child." In U.S. dominant discourse about paper children immigration and among many paper children themselves, the appellation of "paper children" often evokes the connotation of illegal immigration while that of "adopted children" presumes legality. David Der, for instance, writes on the website of the Federation of Chinese American and Canadian American Medical Societies that he is the adopted son of his paper parents, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Prominent Chinese American historian Him Mark Lai also recalls that his father Lai Bing always feared that immigration officials would find out that he was a paper son, so he taught even his children "a concocted story about him being adopted (by his paper family) in order to explain the discrepancy in our surnames, should someone ask" after he

[40] Lincoln Chin and Mary Gin Wu, "Immigration Story of An American Citizen," *Immigration Voice*, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, accessed January 30, 2016, https://www.aiisf.org/immigrant-voices/stories-by-author/931-immigration-story-of-an-american-citizen/.

decided to add his original surname as his children's middle name.[41] Both Der's and Lai Bing's stories indicate how the term of "adopted sons" could be conveniently used by paper sons to legitimize their immigration in the Exclusion Era. Their narratives also point to the fact that for some paper sons, the identities of "paper sons" and "adopted sons" are interchangeable.

Paper Children Immigration/Adoption: Fictive Kinship Formation

My treatment of paper children as adoptees also enables me to see how paper children created sophisticated, interwoven fictive kinships that both borrowed from and became far more complicated than the Chinese practice of adoption. In this process, immigrants displayed their resilience and creativity in order to carve out ways to enter the country that barred them through the exclusion acts and to form families. The paper children narratives also reveal how kinship formation in Chinese immigrant families during the Exclusion Era was a mixture of both blood and paper parent-child relationships, challenging the U.S. dominant discourse on the illegality of Chinese immigrants that only acknowledged paper children's hidden, original identities and naturalized biological parent-child bonds.

The immigration story of Hop Jeong's family is an excellent case in point. His grandfather, a first-generation paper son, came with the paper of a U.S.-born citizen. After successfully entering the country, his grandfather "created a family of nine children, or paper children." Hop's father was one of the nine, but his entrance was rejected because he was more than ten years older than the paper he held. In 1938, his grandfather went back to China to bring Jeong and his brother over. Since Jeong's father had been denied entry, his two sons had to enter as paper sons. Jeong came as the son of one of his grandfather's nine (paper) children, his brother entering as the son of another. As a result, they became cousins rather than brothers. But because they looked too much alike, his grandfather had to separate them: Jeong came alone while his brother entered with his grandfather. According to Jeong's oral history, his family name and relationship

[41] Lai, Lim and Yung, *Island*, 220.

with his grandfather were "real" but his paper and relationship with his brother were not.[42] Here we see how the line between blood and paper relationships, as well as between real and unreal identities, could be blurred. Some immigrants created fictive kinship not because they lacked blood relationship, or so-called "real kinship," but because "real kinship" did not guarantee immigration, indicating both how the exclusion acts changed the nature of kinship formation in the Chinese immigrant community and how resilient Chinese immigrants were in order to create opportunities to enter.

What is striking is that Jeong's grandfather made great efforts to maintain his paper family relationships when the Chinese exclusion acts prohibited him from forming families and enjoying family life in America. According to Jeong, his grandfather did not want to talk about their "true family relationships," and was more concerned with the paper family because he was afraid that their paper family relationships would be discovered and that they would be deported, and because he wanted to have more family members, both blood and paper, immigrate. Jeong and his brother were forbidden to speak of anything other than their paper family relationships, even in private. His grandfather was also furious when Jeong used a new English name "Richard" to replace his paper first name "Hop" at school. To Jeong's grandfather, while fear of being deported was real and played a major role in his efforts to maintain their paper family relationships, it is also likely that as a "bachelor" in Chinatown, he took the family formed through paper immigration as his real family.[43] Indeed, not only his grandfather but the San Francisco government treated them as a family. Right after landing, Jeong lived with his grandfather and brother in one room in Chinatown, a place he called the ghetto. When the Yuen

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[42] Angel Island Oral History Project, "AIOH-21, Hop Jeong," Interviewed by Ian Durfee, March 22, 2006, collection of Pacific Regional Humanities Center, Univeristy of California at Davis, accessed March 28, 2016, http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7w48z3s9.

[43] I use a quotation mark on the word "bachelor" because, recent scholarship of Asian American studies has complicated or challenged this concept of Chinese American community as a "bachelor society" by demonstrating that Asian immigrants were either forming interracial families in the United States or maintaining transnational family patterns with their wives and children left behind in their homelands. See Madeline Hsu's *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 90-123; Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the–Century New York City* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 144-5, 155-157; John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 160-1; Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 103.

Project—a Chinatown housing project for lower-income families—started in San Francisco, Jeong, his grandfather, and his brother had a chance to move in, as they were counted by the government as a "family."

What is also striking is that his grandfather kept bringing his family, both men and women, in through the paper family method, indicating once again the constructed nature of Chinese immigrant families that mixed blood relationships with paper relationships. In 1938 when Jeong's grandfather returned to China to bring Jeong and his brother over, he reported to the immigration officers that his wife had passed away and that he had remarried a young woman in China. In 1952, Jeong's grandfather returned to China again to bring Jeong's mother, as his remarried wife, as well as Jeong's sister and another brother left in China. Jeong's mother thus turned into his "grandmother," while his brother and sister became his "uncle and aunt."

By narrating a complicated story of how his grandfather expanded the family through paper immigration, Jeong seems to deliberately obscure the line between blood and paper relationships, revealing that he is less interested in distinguishing "real" relationships from "unreal" ones than in demonstrating that both were components of fictive kinship formation. He did not clarify whether his grandfather had a blood or paper relationship to him, or whether his father was his grandfather's blood or paper son. It is also hard to tell, from his narrative, whether his mother was his grandfather's paper or real wife. When he talked about his grandfather's remarriage to his mother, Jeong stated that "he remarried, to a young woman. Well, this young woman he remarried, actually is my mother," which indicates the marriage might be real. Yet he also commented that the people whom his grandfather brought over in 1952 were again "a paper family that he created and he just kept going and going."[44]

Jeong's family story thus provides a splendid example to illustrate the fictive nature of kinship making through paper immigration. His grandfather kept bringing paper family members to America, so his paper family became larger and larger over the years. Unlike many

[44] "AIOH-21, Hop Jeong."

immigrants who created paper slots to make money, his grandfather seemed to have no interest in doing so, but persisted in adding (paper) family members into the family and thus producing complicated, interwoven relationships—in this family brothers turned into cousins, the mother became the grandmother, and brother and sister became uncle and aunt. As Jeong hints in his oral history, his grandfather, as an old "bachelor" in Chinatown, seemed to be seeing this family as true, tangible, and significant, and tried every means to protect it. In a country that was hostile and exclusionary to Chinese immigrants and that deprived the Chinese of the rights and opportunities to make families, Jeong's grandfather manipulated the paper immigration system to weave a kinship web that was both blood and non-blood.

Helen Hong Wong's immigration story is even more intriguing, showing that a paper parent-child relationship may also be a marital relationship in private. When she was twenty-one, Helen Hong Wong's family offered her in marriage to a fifty-year-old Gold Mountain Guest, Harry Wong. Harry's immigration paper had expired, so he acquired the paper of 45-year-old merchant Lee Wai Mun, who was supposed to be returning to America with his 16-year-old daughter and 11-year-old son from their trip to Europe. After their wedding in 1928, Harry took Helen and her cousin as his paper daughter and son to the United States. However, their interrogation failed, and the paper father hired an attorney to appeal the case to Washington D.C. After waiting for six months, the family finally landed after paying a $500 departure bond for each member. They "disappeared leaving no trace," as recorded in one of the letters in their immigration file.[45] Here we see the marriage between Helen and her husband was maintained on the basis of their paper relationship as father and daughter. In other words, after landing, Harry and Helen would be father and daughter in public, but husband and wife in private, suggesting once again the constructed nature of Chinese immigrant families.

Chinese American families during the Exclusion Era, therefore, were a fictive construct that emphasized not real or unreal relationships, nor blood or non-blood children, but the

[45] "Helen Hong Wong: 'No Gold to Be Picked Up.'" In Lee and Yung, *Angel Island*, 270.

"putative," "constructed," "invented" nature of paper families, to borrow Catherine Lee's terms in her book *Fictive Kinship*. Lee maintains that the word "fictive" stresses "the particularly constructed, invented, and contested nature of concepts that tie or bind such connections."[46] By deliberately choosing the term "fictive," I do not mean that the kinship formed through paper children immigration was fake or unreal; rather, I argue against the dominant discourse that treated these families as such. I contend that the dichotomy of real/unreal parent-child relationship was the very foundation on which the dominant discourse portrayed paper children as illegal immigrants. More importantly, by using this term, I treat family formation through paper children immigration as a fiction to emphasize the creativity and imagination of Chinese immigrants in circumventing the exclusion acts, which, together with the anti-miscegenation laws, tried to bar the Chinese from entry and eliminate Chinese families within the country.

While Chinese immigrants were creative in forming fictive kinship relations, this fictive kinship was co-created and legitimized by immigration officials through intimidating cross interrogations and official decisions. Paper children entered the U.S. after strict interrogations of paper fathers and/or brothers, witnesses in America, and themselves. These interrogations very often contained hundreds of minute questions, including, for instance, "Who lives in the 1st house, third row (of your village)?" and "Of what materials are the floors made in the second house, 1st row?"[47] Those under interrogation were required to give exact and consistent answers, and major inconsistencies might incur deportation of the applicants. Chinese American historian Judy Yung, who was one of the major interviewers of Angel Island Oral History Project from 1975 to 1990, recalled that in one case, a twelve-year-old boy was questioned in hearings that contained eighty-seven pages of testimony, but was still denied entry.[48]

Intimidating as the interrogations were, the vast majority of paper children were actually allowed to enter and their legal status was thus recognized by the U.S. government as

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[46] Lee, *Fictive Kinship*, 6.
[47] "Lee Neo Fook," No. 14390/2-8, Immigration Arrival Investigation Case Files, 1940-2003, RG 85, U.S. National Archives at San Francisco.
[48] Lee and Yung, *Angel Island*, 93.

represented by the Immigration Service. From 1910 to 1940 when Angel Island Immigration Station functioned, only five to seven percent of all Chinese applicants were denied entry.[49] As stated earlier, both immigration officials and immigrants themselves believed that around 90 percent of Chinese immigrants during the Exclusion Era used fraudulent papers. However, no matter how much the officials believed the immigrants were using fraudulent documents, those very officials decided to allow the paper children entry, thus legitimizing their status. Erika Lee has also argued that the paper son immigration was "created and maintained" by both Chinese immigrants and the state:

> The government's early attempts to track Chinese immigrants and returning citizens through partnership files, entry and departure records, and applicant and witness testimonies were part of its effort to prevent illegal immigration. Ironically, they had the opposite effect, creating many additional opportunities for fraud and evasion. Once a Chinese applicant secured admission into the United States and received the proper documentation, he could use that same paper record to create as many sponsored immigration slots as he desired.[50]

Once arrived, paper children received "a certificate of identity," according to the 1892 Geary Act and 1893 McCreary Amendment, through which they became legal residents, and citizens if they entered as children of (sons of) citizens. Although the Chinese were racialized as the first and only ethnic group to carry the certificate, which did not protect them from racial discrimination, the certificate itself, issued by the Immigration Service, legitimized their stay in the U.S.

The Hong family was a typical example through which we see how the Immigration Service co-created and legitimized fictive kinship based on both blood and paper relationships. When investigated by the INS on July 29, 1963, Hong Sik Chong confessed that he was a paper son of his paternal uncle, Hong Mow (or Hang Mau, as his immigration file sometimes

[49] The figure of five percent is from Lai, Lim and Yung, *Island,* 21. The figure of seven percent is from Judy Yung and Erika Lee's *Angel Island: Immigration Gateway to America*, 93.
[50] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 203.

recorded). He was investigated because his paper brother, blood son of his paper father, Sik Gong, appeared voluntarily to the INS, stating that he believed his deceased father, Hong Mow, was born in China, rather than America, as he had claimed. In doing so, he "nullified the citizenship claims" of himself, his two foreign born sons, his (paper) brothers, and their foreign born families.[51] It is hard to know why Sik Gong decided to confess voluntarily even at the risk of nullification of citizenship for the extensive family, but an analysis of Hong Mow's immigration file shows that his admission into the country and claim to U.S. citizenship was approved by the Immigration Service itself. Hong Mow first landed in 1902 as a U.S. citizen. On Aug. 8, 1902, Chinese inspector A.S. Schell wrote to the inspector in charge, James R. Dunn, that after taking the testimony and a careful review of the witnesses who had appeared on behalf of Hang Mau, he "was led to believe that [Hang Mau] is a native of the United States." Hong Mow was thus issued a certificate of identity No. 5054. With the establishment of his U.S. citizenship by the Immigration Service, Hong Mow was able to bring three blood sons and a paper son, Hong Sik Chong. These sons then brought over their own blood and paper sons and daughters. Among them, Hong Sik Chong brought over two paper sons and two paper daughters.[52] For decades after Hong Mow's successful landing as an American-born native, he and his (paper)children and (paper)grandchildren led a life in the United States as American citizens, whose citizenship was investigated and verified by the Immigration Service, until Hong Sik Gong voluntarily confessed otherwise.

Viewing paper children in the framework of fictive kinship formation also provides a glimpse into the resilience of Chinese immigrants as they invented ways to resist and circumvent the exclusion acts and to establish families. Some immigrants turned to paper immigration because they did not want to separate from spouses left in China. American citizen Dong Kingman was a successful artist, and was invited by the U.S. government to tour in Asia as a Cold War cultural diplomat in the 1950s. During and after his tour, he was lauded by key

[51] "Hong Sik Chong," A13 703 729, Alien Case File, National Archives at San Francisco.
[52] "Hong Mow," A 36330/6-19, Alien Case File, National Archives at San Francisco.

domestic magazines, such as *Life* and *American Artist*, and was reported to be showing his artistic techniques during the presidential inauguration ceremony for Chang Kai-shek in Taiwan.[53] Even so, during the Exclusion Era, in order not to separate from his Chinese bride, Kingman had to bring her to America through the paper daughter system. A U.S.-born citizen, Kingman went to China in 1916 and returned to the United States in 1929, right after his marriage in Hong Kong. He did not want to leave his bride in Hong Kong, but the 1924 Immigration Act made it impossible for her to enter as his wife. In order to join her husband, she used the paper of his sister, who was also born in the United States. In other words, like the Chinese practice of adopting a girl as future daughter-in-law, his wife had to become the paper daughter of her parents-in-law in order to immigrate. The experience of Kingman's wife was not unusual. As he told the interviewer, "you can not bring your wife anyway—being [an] American citizen. So you almost have to…wait for years [to reunite with her] or gather kind [of] artificial paper to come in as somebody else's sister or something…[T]hat's the normal thing to do."[54]

Paper daughter Sheung Ngaw Jin's story is another striking example. Jin came to the U.S. in 1940. She was a married woman with a three-year-old daughter, but in order to reunite with her husband, she took the paper of a single woman, as the paper daughter of a person who she met only after she was landed in San Francisco. After WWII, she was finally reunited with the daughter she left behind in China when "her husband purchased another sets of identification papers" for her.[55] Thus the whole family was reunited in the United States through the paper daughter system.

While the Chinese practice of adoption provided the blueprint for paper children immigration/adoption, the principle of family reunification in the U.S. immigration policies made it both possible and workable. Catherine Lee observes that family reunification provisions

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[53] Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success*, 135.
[54] Angel Island Oral History Project, "Dong Kingman," transcript of Dong Kingman's interview on September 5, 1985, interviewer unknown, collected from the Office of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, March 29, 2016.
[55] Flo Oy Wong, "A Paper Daughter's Angel Island Story," *Immigration Voice*, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, accessed January 30, 2016, https://www.aiisf.org/immigrant-voices/stories-by-author/658-a-paper-daughters-angel-island-story/.

existed long before the 1965 Immigration Act that opened doors for immigrants to sponsor their family members to enter. For instance, in both the1875 Page Act, the first federal immigration restriction policy which excluded most Chinese women, and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that barred Chinese laborers from entry, immigrants of exempt classes could bring their wives and minor children to the country.[56] The family reunification provisions also opened doors for Japanese and Korean women to enter as picture brides from 1907, when Japanese laborers were barred due to the Gentlemen's Agreement between the U.S. and the Japanese government, to 1924 with the enactment of Johnson-Reed Immigration Act that discontinued picture-bride immigration. The 1924 Immigration Act itself contained family reunification provisions that permitted admission for wives and unmarried children of U.S. citizens but due to its label of Asians as "aliens ineligible for citizenship," the provisions did not benefit Asian immigrants. Even so, on May 25, 1925, the Supreme Court ruled that wives and minor children of alien Chinese merchants could enter as nonquota immigrants.[57] Immigration policies passed later continued to contain family reunification provisions, including the 1945 War Brides Act that allowed soldiers to bring their alien wives and families to the United States and the 1952 Immigration Act that allowed spouses and children of U.S. citizens to enter as nonquota immigrants.[58] Therefore, family unification has been a consistent theme in U.S. immigration policies of various periods and it was exactly this theme that made paper children immigration/adoption possible.

As Lee argues, for immigration policy makers and immigrants respectively, family and family reunification meant different things and served different purposes. For policy makers, family was "the fundamental social unit of the nation." The ideal American family as a white, middle-class nuclear one required the maintenance of racial purity and boundaries between insiders and outsiders.[59] Moreover, Chinese immigrants did not fit into the picture of an

[56] Lee, *Fictive Kinship*, 15.
[57] Ibid., 67.
[58] Ibid., 15
[59] Ibid., 11.

idealized American family type since according to mainstream white society, their alleged unassimilability "constituted by illicit drug use, debauched sexuality, disease, ability to live under depressed wage conditions, and illegitimate family formations" contaminated white family patterns and menaced national identity.[60] Nonetheless, the Chinese took advantage of the ideological emphasis placed on family reunification in the immigration policies to enter, usually as derivative citizens, or paper children of U.S. citizens of Chinese descent, even though the policies did not give Chinese families the same recognition as U.S.-born white families. In other words, the immigrants seized the opportunity to force the U.S. immigration system to abide by—though unwilling and unknowingly—its own legal principles of family reunification.

I thus contend that the restrictive and discriminatory immigration policies that privileged family reunification, together with the deeply entrenched influence of Chinese practice of adoption, generated the widespread practice of paper children immigration/adoption. Peter Li argues that faced with the exclusion acts, paper son practice became a "response mechanism," and kinship ties, both real and fictive, turned into a resource for Chinese immigrants.[61] I problematize the tendency to dichotomize real and fictive kinship, and have argued instead that the fictive kinship established through paper children immigration/adoption was made through a mixture of blood and paper relationships. As Mr. Chew, one informant in the Angel Island Oral History Project, laments, "For most Chinese, even if your father was real, your grandfather wasn't. How else could we come?"[62] Therefore, blood and paper children deployed the principle of family reunification in immigration policies to enter the country, and those whose families were separated by the exclusion acts used the principle to bring blood and/or paper children in during the Exclusion Era and the pre-1965 period. Paper children immigration/adoption thus became the most important means through which Chinese immigrants formed fictive kinship.

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[60] Lee, *Fictive Kinship*, 55.
[61] Peter Li, "Fictive Kinship, Conjugal Tie and Kinship Chain," 49, 55, 58.
[62] Angel Island Oral History Project, "Mr. Chew," interviewed by Him Mark Lai and Laura Lai, December 13, 1976 in San Francisco, California, collection from the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, March 29, 2016.

Identity Lost and Reestablished

Like Cold War and post-Cold War adoptees, paper children experienced their identities as lost and/or reestablished. However, unlike legal adoptees who could speak of their longing for the identities they had lost in China, paper children had to keep their original identities hidden, as they struggled with the perception of U.S. mainstream society that they were illegal immigrants and imposters. While many paper children internalized their new identities as such and sought to escape the shadow of illegal immigration, many others used various means to negotiate their identities, either accepting their paper identities or reestablishing new ones by including their paper identities as part of who they were.

The Chinese Confession Program offered some paper sons a precious opportunity to reestablish their lost identities. In the mid-1950s, sponsored by the INS, the U.S. Departments of States and of Justice launched the program aiming to eliminate Chinese paper immigration. The U.S. government proposed that those who confessed would be naturalized as U.S. citizens under the Section 249 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. But even confession did not guarantee their naturalization. As Mae Ngai has found, some confessors were considered "ineligible for relief," and a relatively small number were deported. A total number of 11,336 Chinese initiated the confession and an additional 19,124 were involved and confessed subsequently.[63] Interwoven with Cold War racial politics, the program failed to bring the Chinese American community the legitimacy of which it had long dreamed. As Ngai argues, while the program benefitted a number of Chinese Americans, the government's campaign against Chinese illegal immigration and the INS's administration of the program compromised "the legitimacy of their newly won legal status."[64] Ellen Wu also comments that the Confession Program did nothing to erase the impression that Chinese in America are "foreign and potentially menacing to the national polity." On the contrary, the media coverage of the jury investigations created the

[63] Mae M. Ngai, "Legacies of Exclusion: Illegal Chinese Immigration during the Cold War Years," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 1 (Fall, 1998), 24, 22.
[64] Ibid. 4.

opposite effect.[65] In other words, the Confession Program failed to erase the impression that Chinese immigrants were illegal.

Even so, many paper children immigrants viewed the program as an opportunity to reclaim their original Chinese identities, and possibly to sponsor members of their birth families to the United States. Mock Ging Sing entered in 1938 with the paper of a Chang Hall Hoy. He confessed in 1964, and was soon naturalized. He initially felt reluctant to confess, fearing that by doing so he would bring trouble for his paper mother. However, after one of his paper brothers confessed, he changed his mind, because he felt terrible about giving up his family name when he left China. He recalled years later, "my surname is Mock and I wanted to remain a Mock. I felt *very good* about the confession. Before that, I was always worried about some immigration officer coming to my house to arrest me. It was a big load off my mind."[66] Like many paper children faced with the Confession Program, Mock was burdened with the fear of arrest after his paper brother's confession. Usually when one paper family member confessed, the pressure to confess would haunt all other ones as well. In actuality, the whole Chinese community was targeted by political propaganda from the U.S. government, the media coverage of the investigations, as well as the INS's aggressive seeking to "induce confessions from people whose names surfaced in investigative leads from anonymous telephone calls, letters, and coaching material the Service seized."[67] However, Mock's narrative shows that while the external pressure to confess was real, his decision to confess seemed to be more motivated by his internal desire to regain his lost identity.

Richard Jeong Jew also chose to confess, but he seemed to be bothered more by his status as a paper son than by the problem of identity. He was born as Jew Jeong Ngar in Chun Sun, Canton province. He immigrated in 1937 when he was thirteen, and lived in Firebaugh, California, with his grandparents, and his paternal uncle and aunt who were also his paper

[65] Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 140.
[66] Lee and Yung, *Angel Island*, 323-324.
[67] Ngai, "Legacies of Exclusion," 23.

parents. One year later he took the name of Richard Jew when he started his formal school education. In 1960, however, he took advantage of the Chinese Confession Program to "straighten out" his immigration paper, and was naturalized on October 14, 1963. When he recalled the day of his naturalization, he exclaimed that "that day made me the happiest man on earth."[68] With limited information disclosed in his oral history, we do not know why his confession and naturalization made him "the happiest man on earth." But his remarks imply that he had been bothered by his paper son identity all the years after immigration. His narrative was all the more striking when considering that unlike Mock, his confession did not bring him a new identity. It seems that being a paper son itself was bothering him, and that the Chinese Confession Program provided him with the opportunity to walk out of the paper-son shadow.

More often than not, faced with the institutionalized program, members of extended families made different choices (if not implicated into the same case), indicating how paper children exerted their agency to choose, for their own benefits, whether to remain their paper identities or regain their original ones. Tung Pok Chin's *Paper Son: One Man's Story* narrates two paper sons who made opposite decisions when faced with the Confession Program. B7, the seventh brother of Chin's second wife, was a paper son who was attracted to the United States by stories that its streets were paved with gold. Upon arrival, his hopes were dashed and he desperately longed to return to Hong Kong, but his paper family stopped him because they feared that his confession and return to Hong Kong would endanger the whole paper family. B7 was thus made a captive in the "Gold Mountain." He became a runaway for two years, hiding and working "'under the table' for the lowest wages, at any restaurant in New York's Chinatown that would offer him work," until he joined the U.S. army, was discharged honorably, and subsequently confessed.[69] With his confession he was naturalized. According to Chin, confession enabled B7 to regain both his original self and his "freedom" from being physically

[68] Kiyoshi Din, "The Tale of Richard Jeong Jew," *Immigration Voice*, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, accessed January 30, 2016, https://www.aiisf.org/immigrant-voices/stories-by-author/657-the-tale-of-richard-jeong-jew/.
[69] Chin and Chin, *Paper Son*, 65-66.

exploited, and accordingly, opportunities to move up to prosperity. Indeed, he later bought into a restaurant as a partner, and formed a family of his own.[70]

The author of the memoir, Tung Pok Chin, however, refused to confess, and maintained his paper identity all his life. He had been kidnapped by bandits as a child and sold to his Chinese parents as an adopted son before his immigration as a paper son under the name of Tung Pok Chin. Besides working as a laundryman in Chinatown, he also wrote poems and commentaries for the local Chinese newspaper, *China Daily News*, using his original name, Lai Bing Chan. Writing thus became a special way through which he reclaimed his original Chinese identity. Therefore, being a Chin did not bother him as much as it bothered his wife. "Why not (confess)? ...what about our identities? And the children's names? And the generation after that? Our name is not Chin," his wife urged him. "Neither the name is truly my own, …What's the point of confessing when I don't even know what my real name or date of birth is?" Chin argued.[71] Without knowing who he really was, Chin was more comfortable with his paper identity, and chose to keep it both for himself and his children, indicating that not all paper children were eager to reassert their original identities. His rejection of replacing his paper son identity with his original identity of a Chinese adopted son also suggests that in his mind, an adopted son did not differ in nature from a paper son. Once again, we see the dichotomy of adopted children/legal and paper children/illegal is challenged.

The vast majority of paper children made choices similar to those of Chin. According to Mae M. Ngai, only 11,336 confessed, made up less than 10 percent of the Chinese population as recorded in the 1950 census.[72] Some chose not to confess because they did not trust the U.S. government. A confession did not lead to an immediate naturalization; sometimes applicants had to wait for as long as five years before naturalization. During the waiting years, the danger of

[70] Chin and Chin, *Paper Son* Ibid., 111-2.
[71] Ibid., 121-2.
[72] In the Confession Program, only 11,336 confessed to having entered as paper children, which was less than 10 percent of the 117, 629 Chinese population as recorded in the 1950 census, but another 19,124 were implicated as having fraudulent papers by the confessions of others. See Ngai, "Legacies of Exclusion," 22, 28.

deportation was ever present, considering the precariousness of Sino-U.S. relations in early Cold War era. More seemed to be like Chin, comfortable with their paper identities, which, to them, were not fake, but part of who they were.

Some other paper children designed alternative ways to create identities and to give these identities legal status. C. Tony Leong's life story provides an excellent case in point. He came in 1914 as a paper son named Chew Tang Chun, and went back to China in 1925 to bring his wife, who had to enter as a paper daughter because of the 1924 Immigration Act.[73] After her landing, they were married again in San Francisco. But what puzzled all their children was that their marriage license took their mother's paper surname "Leong," rather than their father's, "Chun," since it was not the Chinese custom that a husband took his wife's surname. Such a puzzle was finally solved when the children turned to their paternal aunt, who testified that actually C. Tony Leong's original surname was Leong, and in order to regain this surname for both himself and his children, he deliberately "bought a paper surname of Leong" for his wife before her entry "with the apparent and eventual purpose of using it for their married surname."[74] In other words, after their marriage, C. Tony Leong was able to retain his original surname in a creative and legal way without relinquishing his status as an American citizen.

C. Tony Leong exemplifies a group of paper children immigrants who, rather than choosing to confess or not to confess, carved out zones in which to reestablish their new identities. The name "C. Tony Leong" itself shows the mixture of his paper surname "Chun," his original surname "Leong," and his English name "Tony." The blending of his paper, legal identity, and his original surname made him a new person. C. Tony Leong's story, together with other paper-children narratives, thus displays the resilience of Chinese immigrants not only in

[73] The 1924 Immigration Act excluded foreign-born wives of U.S. citizens, so C. Tony Leong's wife could not come as his wife, but on May 25, 1925, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case *Chan et al. v. John D. Nagle* that "the alien Chinese wives and minor children of domiciled alien merchants could enter the United States for permanent residence." It was likely that Leong's wife entered as a paper daughter of a merchant. See Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold Dreaming of Home*, 96.

[74] Tony C. Leong, Jr., "The Journeys of C. Tony Leong and May Chung Leong to America Via Angel Island," *Immigration Voice*, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, accessed January 30, 2016, https://www.aiisf.org/immigrant-voices/stories-by-author/755-the-journeys-of-c-tony-leong-and-may-chung-leong-to-america-via-angel-island/.

circumventing the exclusion acts that tried to bar them from entering the United States but also in reestablishing their identities after entry.

Not all paper children resumed their original surnames, but this does not mean that they completely abandoned them. Many chose not to disclose their original selves during their lifetimes, but displayed their original names in Chinese alongside their paper names in English on their headstones. To those who read only English, the paper names were the only ones legible, but to those who could read Chinese, the original Chinese names told of hidden Chinese identities. In this way, many paper sons could reclaim their secret, original selves.

The following story in which two brothers shared the same name exemplifies some paper sons who came to terms with both their paper and their original identities, but negotiated these identities in different ways. Gin Shue, the paper son discussed earlier, was part of the story. His father Gin Soo Dung was an American-born citizen but was taken to China as a one-year-old boy. In 1903 when he returned to America as a young man of twenty-two, Gin Soo Dung was denied entry based on the Immigration Service's judgment that he was neither a citizen, nor a member of an exempt class. His attorney immediately filed a writ of habeas corpus through which he was admitted. However, seven months later he returned to China again, where he married and fathered Gin Shue, and died sometime between 1904 to 1907. His father then asked Gin Soo Dung's half-brother to emigrate to the United States by using his paper. The second Gin Soo Dung assumed his half-brother's identity but could not answer many questions related to the real Gin Soo Dung in the interrogation, and was thus denied entry. He did not give up, but appealed the case, which was heard by O.T. Richey, United States Commissioner of the First Judicial District of the Territory of Arizona on November 16, 1908. Based on the 1903 court ruling that Gin Soo Dung was a citizen, the second Gin Soo Dung was admitted and "officially certified as Gin Soo Dung."[75] That is, when his paper identity was denied, the second Gin Soo

[75] Lincoln Chin, "Alice Gin's Father: The Story of Two Brothers Who Shared the Same Name," *Immigration Voice*, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, accessed January 30, 2016, http://aiisf.org/immigrant-voices/stories-by-author/835-alice-gins-father-the-story-of-two-brothers-who-shared-the-same-name/.

Dung negotiated it through the legal system based on which his identity as Gin Soo Dung was legitimized.

Although living in his brother's identity all his life, the second Gin Soo Dung never forgot who he really was. When he died in 1951, he used his headstone to reveal his original identity. The top of his gravestone displayed his paper name in English together with his paper birth year, 1881. The bigger part of the stone, however, displayed his own identity and place of origin, in Chinese. After his death, his erased original self was disclosed to the world, parallel with his paper one. Such a story is not rare. My research shows that it was common among paper sons to have two identities carved on their gravestone, indicating that death provided them with opportunities to reveal secret selves that they dared not to disclose when alive.

Conclusion

When talking about the Chinese Exclusion Act at the end of his oral history, Hop Jeong commented that "this is part of the history that you might say this country is trying to bury. It is the only law that excludes an ethnic group, and sad to say, not many people, even among the Chinese, [are] aware of it."[76] "Trying to burying" the history of Chinese Exclusion, the U.S. dominant discourse has, for over a century, been painting a picture that Chinese immigrants, most of whom entered with counterfeit papers, were illegal, so that the culpability of the U.S. nation-state and its institutionalized exclusion and systematic discrimination against Chinese immigrants could be excused. However, by analyzing paper children's oral histories, this chapter brings the buried history to the surface and flips the script by arguing that due to the de facto adoptive relationship between paper children and their paper families generated in the process of immigration and certified by the Immigration Service, paper children were legal U.S. citizens. An analysis of these paper-children narratives also indicates how paper children immigration/adoption functioned as an important channel through which Chinese immigrants

[76] Angel Island Oral History Project, "AIOH-21, Hop Jeong," Interviewed by Ian Durfee, collection of the University of California at Davis, (March 22, 2006), 17.

formed families based on fictive kinship that blurred the lines between blood and paper relationships.

Departing from the diverse collection of paper children's oral histories through which a group of paper children construct their own life stories during the Exclusion Era, I now turn to the story of one paper son and his paper family, told by Fae Myenne Ng in her novel *Bone*. Narrating from the perspective of the paper son's descendant, the story not only reveals how he and his family are defined by their relationship with his paper father, but also conveys the message that the paper-son legacy must be remembered and passed down to future generations.

CHAPTER 2

Bone, Paper, and Memory: The Making of a Paper Son and of a Paper Family in Fae Myenne Ng's Bone[1]

In *Bone* (1993), Chinese American writer Fae Myenne Ng constructs the immigration experience of two paper sons, the protagonist Leon and You Thin, Leon's friend whom he calls "Cousin," in a way that resembles the narratives in paper sons' oral histories. Although they enter the United States at the same time in the early 1940s, they treat their paper identities differently: You Thin soon reclaims his original identity but Leon chooses to keep his paper identity, reasoning that in the United States "paper is more precious than blood"(9). Elsewhere, Leon's stepdaughter Leila also reiterates that "for a paper son, paper is blood" (61). Through Leon and Leila's words, but more importantly, through Leon and his relationship with his paper father Grandpa Leong, the novel suggests that for many Chinese immigrants during the Exclusion Era, kinship bound by paper is tighter than by blood.

Bone portrays paper son Leon and his family in San Francisco's Chinatown sometime after the Chinese Confession Program between 1956 to 1965. Leon is a merchant seaman, spending most of his time at sea. His wife, Mah, is a seamstress in a Chinatown sweatshop who marries him for a green card after her first husband abandons her and who later has an affair with her boss when Leon is off at sea. Mah and Leon have three adult daughters: Leila, from Mah's first marriage and the eldest one, Ona, who commits suicide by jumping from the Nam building in Chinatown, and Nina, who distances herself from her parents and Chinatown by moving far away to New York. The novel portrays the difficult life of the Chinese working-class immigrant family: Leon and his wife's struggle for survival in a discriminatory society, their marriage full of strife and bitterness, and the generational and cultural clashes between them and their American-born daughters. Equally important, however, is that Leon's paper father, Grandpa

[1] I highlight the word "paper" because paper in this novel does not only mean Leon's immigration paper, but also all papers he collects. Ng constructs Leon the paper son through both types of papers.

Leong, although dead for years, is ever-present throughout the book. Leon enters as Grandpa Leong's son at the cost of $5,000 and the promise to bury him after his death and send his bones back to China. Leon's relationship with Grandpa Leong thus transcends the paper relationship and develops into a de facto adoptive relationship: in feudal China, as discussed in Chapter One, it was usually the biological or adopted son who undertook the responsibility of properly burying deceased parents. But for years, Grandpa Leong's bones are left unattended. Ona's death reminds Leon of his failure to keep his promise, but his belated search for the bones proves futile: they are forever lost.

This chapter focuses on Leon's relationship with Grandpa Leong, and by analyzing the novel as a paper-son narrative and paper-family narrative, I demonstrate how their paper relationship engenders an enduring impact on different generations of the family. Although not the first Chinese American writer writing about paper sons, Ng is the most well known author on this topic. *Bone* is also the only book-length work that treats paper children immigration not as a stigma but as a legacy for the paper son's descendants to pass down to future generations. Ng started writing the book in 1983, during a period when some Chinese immigrants began to speak out about their secrets of having immigrated as paper children. In the Angel Island Oral History Project from 1975 to 1990, for instance, many interviewees admitted that they were paper children. During the same period, David Henry Hwang published his play *FOB and The House of Sleeping Beauties: Two Plays* (1983) and Maxine Hong Kingston published her novel *China Men* (1980), both touching upon the phenomenon of paper sons. Even so, the topic was rarely mentioned publicly in the United States until the early 2000s when both U.S. mainstream society and descendants of paper children began to pay close attention to it. After 2000, some paper sons published their memoirs. Descendants of paper children also narrated their (grand)parents' immigration stories through various forms, such as documentaries and webpages, many of which shed a positive light on the practice of paper children immigration.[2] Given the time during which

[2] In 2000, Chin Tong Pok published his memoir *Paper Son: One Man's Story*. Wayne Hung Wong also published his *American Paper Son: A Chinese Immigrant in the Midwest* in 2006. In the meantime, the Angel Island Oral History Project continued to

Ng wrote the novel, it is striking that she had such a farsighted perception. None of the current Chinese American fictions depicts the influence of a paper father on his paper son as effectively as does *Bone*, nor do they explore in such a nuanced way the making of a paper family.[3]

Her debut novel, *Bone* achieved immediate success after publication and has drawn considerable scholarly attention and a broad mainstream readership in the United States.[4] Some scholars pay special attention to Ng's narrative form, which employs a reverse chronological order. For instance, Lisa Lowe argues in *Immigrant Acts* that Ng's "reverse approach to Ona's suicide" and her refusal to explain Ona's suicide have the effect of unsettling "causality as a means of investigation." In her view, Ng's narrative reversal works to "criticize the overdevelopment of temporal contextualization as a source of meaning," so "causality" as a conventional means of investigation is disrupted.[5] Juliana Chang considers this reverse chronology as "a temporality of remainder" of what is left behind and covered up by the dominant U.S. history that transformed "catastrophe into progress."[6]

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add interviews of paper children in the early 2000s, and more descendants of paper children began to talk about their (grant)parents' stories through various means, such as documentaries and the *Immigrant Voices* at the website of Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation. The topic of paper children also started to gain attention in mainstream newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the NPR news in the 2000s.

[3] Ng's second book *Steer Toward Rock* also portrays the life and struggles of a paper son Jack Szeto, but through Jack, Ng constructs a different narrative of how a paper son regained his lost identity by cooperating with the Chinese Confession Program. Moreover, two books differ in the paper sons' relationship with the paper fathers: both relationships were, first of all, commercial transactions, but in *Steer Toward Rock*, Jack also had to maintain a fake marriage to his paper father's mistress. In *Bone*, however, Leon's obligation was burying Grandpa Leong after his death and sending his bones back to China, which made Leon Grandpa Leong's de facto adopted son.

[4] Published by New York-based publisher Hyperion Books in 1993 and republished in 2008, *Bone* won the PEN/Faulkner Award in 1994 and became a national bestseller. With the success of *Bone*, Ng was selected as one of *Granta*'s Best Young American Novelists in 1996. Reviews of this book were published in a number of newspapers and magazines, both national and local, such as the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Detroit Free Express*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. It has also been frequently analyzed by scholars, who pay attention to a number of themes, including Ona's suicide—which forms the central plot of the book, the process of Leon's subjectivity formation, Chinatown as a social space, and Ng's narrative style. Ona's death draws wide attention among scholars, such as Youmee Chang and Donald C. Goellnicht. See Youmee Chang, "Chinese Suicide: Political Desire and Queer Exogamy in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 56, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 90-112 and Donald C. Goellnicht, "Of Bones and Suicide: Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 300-330. Besides them, Lisa Lowe argues that in this novel, Chinatown is constructed as a social space, see Lisa Lowe, *Immigration Acts: on American Cultural Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University, 1996); Allen Gee analyzes the novel's narrative style, see Gee, "Deconstructing a Narrative Hierarchy: Leila Leong's I in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*," *MELUS* 29, no. 2 (Summer, 2004): 129-140; Thomas W. Kim focuses on the process of Leon's subjectivation, see Kim, "'For a Paper Son, Paper is Blood': Subjectivation and Authenticity in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*," *Melus* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 41-56.

[5] See Lisa Lowe, *Immigration Acts*, 122;

[6] Juliana Chang, "Melancholic Remains: Domestic and National Secrets in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 1, (Spring 2015): 116.

I contend that this narrative form foregrounds memory as a literary vehicle in this novel. The book is narrated from Leila's perspective in the first person in the past tense. The reverse chronological order replicates the workings of memory, especially the memory of trauma: Leila's narration moves as if she is uncovering layers of memory like peeling an onion, painfully exposing layers and layers of fragments that move in concentric ring towards the core—Ona's suicide. The book starts with Leila looking for Leon in San Francisco's Chinatown after returning from her trip to visit Nina in New York; it then shifts to her meeting with Nina in New York and her marriage to Mason there followed by what happens in the family before her flight to New York with Mason. It is not until the end of the book that Leila recalls in detail Ona's death, again in a reverse chronological order. She narrates how her (step)parents react to the tragic news many days after Ona's memorial service; next, how the family prepares for the service several days after Ona's death; and finally, how she receives the news on the very day of Ona's jump. On the other hand, Ona's death is mentioned in almost all the chapters as a continuous haunting. Put another way, the chronological narrative order is sometimes "dissolved at the expense of [Leila's] subjective experience of time."[7] Moreover, as a memory teller, Leila not only mediates between past and present but also exerts her agency by choosing what to tell and to what degree and by choosing what not to tell. For instance, she never reveals why Ona commits suicide, as if her memory consciously or unconsciously filters out the truth behind Ona's death.

Throughout this novel, remembering and recounting stories of this family involves far more than the simple act of recollection; instead, remembering requires a reinvention and reconstruction of relationships and identities. Through memory as well as the images of bone and paper as bearers of memory, Ng constructs Leon's identity as a paper son, Leila's own identity as the stepdaughter of a paper son, and the Leong paper family—the family originated from

[7] Birgit Neumann, "The Literary Representation of Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll, and Ansgar Nünning, De Gruyter (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, D-10785 Berlin, 2008), 336.

Grandpa Leong but extending to Leon's family. Put another way, Ng narrates a complex process of fictive kinship formed through the memories recounted by Leila and preserved in paper form by Leon, and anchored and haunted by the bones of the dead family members—Grandpa Leong and Ona. Ultimately, these acts of memory compose kinship in ways that overcome death and transcend blood ties.

Ng gives rich symbolic meanings to paper and endows Leon's immigration paper with a generative power, through which she challenges the U.S. dominant discourse that treats paper children's immigration papers as fake—and therefore illegitimate— and functioning solely for immigration. Paper in this novel refers both to the counterfeit immigration paper Leon holds to enter the country and all kinds of papers—such as letters, official documents, and old newspapers—that he collects and honors. Ng constructs the image of Leon the paper son through both types of papers. On the one hand, Leon's identity and existence in America is defined by his paper/de facto adoptive relationship with Grandpa Leong, which generates strong psychological, if not emotional, ties that profoundly affect Leon, especially how he understands Ona's suicide. On the other hand, the novel also constructs Leon's image through the various types of papers he keeps in the United States, which both document his existence in the discriminatory society that renders him invisible and mark him as a failure and unassimilable outsider in the country where he claims citizenship. Moreover, Leon's immigration paper produces his marital relationship with Mah, and all the papers he keeps also help Leila incorporate Leon's paper-son identity into part of her own and give her a sense of mission to transmit the paper-son legacy to future generations. Ng's powerful narrative thus supplements the oral histories discussed in Chapter One by illustrating the enduring, cross-generational significance of kinship formation by paper children and their adoptive parents during the Exclusion Era.

"The bones were lost, like Ona was lost"

In this novel, bone is both a prominent image—as highlighted in the title—and a memory bearer that marks Leon's struggle between the tension of forgetting Grandpa Leong's bones and

constantly remembering them. Due to his forgetting to fulfill his promise to Grandpa Leong, the bones are missing, but Ona's death, or her broken bones after jumping from the Nam building, frequently reminds him of the missing bones. As the novel traces Leon's ongoing process of forgetting and remembering, *Bone* constructs complex but enduring psychological ties between him and Grandpa Leong. Grandpa Leong's missing bones are symbolically intermingled with Ona's broken bones, and become the metaphor through which Ng constructs the hidden, inherent generational bond among Grandpa Leong, Leon, and Ona that combines both blood and paper relationships and that is so tight that it defies even death. In other words, death prompts memories of obligation to kin in the family that no longer separates blood and paper ties.

By titling the novel *Bone*, Ng centers the narrative on "the tradition of sending the ancestors' bones back to China."[8] In an interview, Ng discusses the desire shared among Chinese immigrants of having their bones repatriated back to China:

> Bone seems to me to be the best metaphor for the enduring quality of the immigrant spirit. The book's title honors the old-timers' desire to have their bones sent back to China for proper burial. I wanted to remember the old-timers buried here against their wishes. As I wrote *Bone*, I was conscious of their regret, so I wanted to create in the language of the book an English that could serve as the fertile and final resting place for my memories of the old-timers.[9]

As Madeline Hsu argues, one major effect of the Chinese exclusion acts was that Chinese immigrants, finding it extremely hard to make permanent homes in the hostile environment in the United States, "continued to look toward China as their home."[10] If returning to China alive was not possible, their dream of going home could be realized through having their bones sent back to China and buried properly in their home villages. The best person to fulfill the task was

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[8] See Angel Velasco Shaw's interview of Ng, "Fae Myenne Ng," in Spring 1993 for *BOMB* magazine, accessed June 13, 2017, http://bombmagazine.org/article/1648/fae-myenne-ng.

[9] Jennifer Brostrom, "Interview with Fae Myenne Ng," *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1994), 88.

[10] Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dream of Home*, 89.

usually the son of the deceased, who made it possible for the dead spirit to rest and displayed to other Gold Mountain guests and village people of the deceased that he had a filial son who would bring his bones home. Leon's promise to send Grandpa Leong's bones back to China thus indicates that their relationship is far more than a business and makes him Grandpa Leong's son in a traditional filial sense. Furthermore, as a Gold Mountain guest himself who always longs to return to China, Leon understands the importance of his promise to Grandpa Leong. As Juliana Chang argues, in order to immigrate to the United States, Leon bears not only an economic debt but also a moral debt of sending Grandpa Leong's bones back to China.[11]

It is this moral debt to Grandpa Leong that frequently reminds Leon of the promise he has forgotten to fulfill. As Leila narrates, "Leon worried about the restless bones, and for years, whenever something went wrong—losing a job, losing the bid for the takeout joint, losing the Ong and Leong Laundry—Leon blamed the bones. But in the end the bones remained here. Then Ona jumped and it was too late" (50). Leon's constant worries manifest that his forgetting generates his haunting memory of the missing bones, so much so that these bones deeply influence the ways in which he looks at failures and tragedies in his life, especially Ona's death.

His remembrance of the missing bones is also caused by his guilt at not fulfilling his obligation like a filial son. Leila interprets his guilt as a sense of shame: "It's shameful to lose a father's grave, even if it's not your real father" (76). Here the phrase "real father" means not so much that Grandpa Leong is a fraudulent father to Leon as that he is not his blood father. More precisely, these missing bones repeatedly remind him of his failure to treat Grandpa Leong as a real father. This does not mean that Leon and Grandpa Leong are bound emotionally. Indeed, throughout the book, Leon shows little emotional connection to Grandpa Leong. On most occasions, Leon views their relationship as a commercial transaction. As Leila recalls, whenever Leon mentions the $5,000 he has paid to Grandpa Leong, "his eyes opened wide like he was hearing the price called out for the first time," indicating that after years of entry, he still cannot

[11] Chang, "Melancholic Remains," 118.

accept the high price he has paid for his paper (50). However, as Thomas Kim maintains, for the most part, Leon's relationship with Grandpa Leong "is nothing but a business transaction, but at certain points in the novel, Leon *is* Grandpa Leong's son."[12] Therefore, Leon's guilt caused by his forgetting his moral debt to Grandpa Leong to take care of the bones and not treating Grandpa Leong as a real father generate strong psychological ties that bind him to Grandpa Leong long after Grandpa Leong is gone.

The psychological bond between Leon and Grandpa Leong is so tight that to Leon, losing Grandpa Leong's bones means losing his own identity. His efforts to look for Grandpa Leong's bones becomes a futile search for his lost identity. Under guidance from the Hoy Sung Ning Yung Benevolent Association, Leon and Leila finally find the gravestone of the extensive Leong family, but not Grandpa Leong's bones. Standing sadly in front of the gravestone, Leon takes "a firm horse stance," which, in Leila's eyes, becomes part of his "own private ritual." But as Leila narrates, "this [ritual] wasn't all about Grandpa Leong. Leon was looking for a part of his own lost life, but more than that, he was looking for Ona" (88). Here Leila implies that Leon's life is inherently bound with Grandpa Leong's bones, and that he is troubled as much by the loss of his own identity as by the missing bones.

Similarly, in Leila's memory, Leon sees that Ona's life is tied to Grandpa Leong's bones as well, so for Leon, losing one means losing the other. After Grandpa Leong's funeral, Leon takes his family to visit his grave during the Ghost Festival, or Tomb Sweeping Festival, as contemporary Chinese call it. He has Mah and the three daughters pose in front of the grave and takes pictures for them with a new camera he has just bought from Japan. However, since he does not know how to use the camera, the roll of film records only one picture: "It was of Ona. She's standing alone in front of the wooden gravemarker, holding a big orange in her hand" (86). Chinese typically present oranges as offerings, along with other food, such as whole cooked chicken or duck, when visiting their deceased parents or ancestors' graves. Here the juxtaposition

[12] Kim, "For a Paper Son, Paper is Blood," 47. The "is" is italicized in the original text to emphasize Leon's status as Grandpa Leong's son.

of Ona with an orange in the picture foreshadows that Ona will be the only child of Leon's whom Grandpa Leong will claim from his grave as an offering. So after Grandpa Leong's bones are lost, "Ona [is] lost" as well (50).

It is significant that among the three daughters, Ona is the one whom Grandpa Leong claims. The most important reason, I argue, is that Leon views Ona as an extension of himself, so Grandpa Leong's claim of Ona can be seen as his seeking Leon's recognition and enactment of his role as son. Among the three daughters, Ona is the closest to Leon:

> When she was little, she'd be weepy for days after Leon left on a voyage, and she'd wait for him, shadowy and pensive, counting off the days till he came home. Every time he lost a job, she went into a depression with him. When he got high on some scheme, she was drunk on it (171-2).

In Leila's memory, Ona echoes Leon's emotional ups and downs, and as Leon is frequently off to sea, Ona's waiting and counting make up his presence in the family. Ona thus represents that part of Leon that he leaves on land when he is on the ship. When Leon discovers Mah's adultery and complains "how he work[s] for us and [brings] home every dollar, how we [are] ungrateful, and how Mah betray[s] him," Ona is "determined" to show Leon how she is grateful and how much she needs him (158). Leila's memory thus constructs Ona not only as the vessel of Leon's anger about his failures in his marriage but also as the provider of what he most needs in his family—companionship, loyalty, gratitude, and recognition for his efforts. Therefore, in losing Ona, Leon loses part of himself and the only satisfaction he can find in his family.

Ona's death also means that Leon loses the part of himself he has left in China. Although born and raised in America, Ona personifies the traditional China held in immigrants' minds. Chinese New Year is Ona's favorite holiday when she and Leon faithfully undertake the role of observing the Chinese traditions and rituals in the family. Ona also loves watching Chinese old-style movies "about butterfly lovers, fox spirits, snake goddesses, and the four great beauties"—all from Chinese classic literary works (158). The way Ona chooses to end her life—jumping

from the thirteen floor, which "in our dialect" is "a good number," of a Chinatown building on a day close to her favorite Chinese holiday—also indicates her reverence for Chinese tradition (123). As Goellnicht sees it, Ona is "the representative of Chinese family," "an embodiment of the community's connection to Chinese traditions and rituals," and "the repository of a residual Chinese, a bone that cannot be worn down."[13] Thus her death symbolizes the cleavage between Leon and the China he has longed to return to all his life and the loss of the Chinese part of his life. It is no wonder that Ona is Leon's only child to be claimed by Grandpa Leong. By claiming Ona's life, Grandpa Leong claims most of Leon's life as well.

Grandpa Leong's claiming of Ona is not only due to her closeness and similarity to Leon; the novel also constructs a generational bond among the three. This generational bond is formed, first of all, through the shared name of *On.* The name of "Leon" is part of the family name "Leong." Similarly, Ona's name is included in Leon's:

> Leon was out at sea when Ona was born, so Mah named her herself. But Mah was thinking of Leon when she picked the name Ona. Leon/Ona. *On* was part of Leon's Chinese name, too. It means 'peace' in our dialect. Mah said it seemed respectful as well as hopeful. Leon was her new man and Ona was their new baby (131).

The syllable *on* appears in all their names—Grandpa Le*on*g, Le*on*, and *On*a—suggesting that their generational connection, made up both of paper and blood relationships, is inherent. In other words, both Leon and Ona are made known to the world through their relationships with Grandpa Leong. Name thus functions as a carrier of memory of interconnections in this family.

The inherent connection among them is further demonstrated through the image of bone, not only Grandpa Leong's missing bones and Ona's broken bones but also Leon's bones or his spirit, as the word 骨 (bone) means metaphorically in Chinese culture. The Chinese phrase 骨氣—which literally means "bone and spirit," and putting the two characters together the phrase means "strength of character"—best explains the connection between the two elements in a

[13] Goellnicht, "of Bones and Suicide," 319-20.

person. Talking about Ona's death, Leila recalls that "[t]he oldtimers believed that the blood came from the mother and the bones from the father" (104). That is, the loss of Ona's life means loss of Leon's bones/spirit. Put in another way, his bones remain in a material sense but his spirit is gone. Indeed, after Ona's death, Leon became "dreamy, lost" (49). Mah observes that "something always went wrong for Leon" (52). Leon also tells Mason that "his concentration was gone, that something disconnected between his mind and his heart" (49). The novel thus conjoins Grandpa Leong's missing bones, Ona's broken bones, and Leon's bones/spirit, demonstrating that the generational bond formed among them is so close that even death can not separate them.

By constructing Leon's whole life as being determined by Grandpa Leong's missing bones, Ng achieves the effect of keeping the oldtimers—a term she uses for old, lonely bachelors—from being buried in the U.S. official memory about Chinese immigrants. This official memory, as Juliana Chang observes, refers to the U.S. "history of exploited labor" that treats oldtimers as the "surplus after the extraction of surplus-value from their labor" that must be cast away.[14] In the office of the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Benevolent Association, Leila is surprised when she is told that Grandpa Leong's bones might have been moved:

> "They move them?" This was news to me; I'd never heard of moving the dead around. "That's weird; are you sure?"
>
> "Sometimes. Make more room. Always need more room. Every day." He asked for a receipt.
>
> …
>
> He told me overcrowding had become a problem at the cemetery and most oldtimers had only leased their burial plots for three, five, or nine years, hoping to be sent back to China by relatives. "More often than not," the man said, "the dead are forgotten. People get busy. Times change, even feelings. It happens" (76).

Leila's surprise indicates how the practice of "moving the dead around" in this cemetery in which Chinese oldtimers are buried clashes with the common sense she holds in Chinese culture that the deceased should be respected and that their bones not be disturbed— except to be sent back to China, as the oldtimers wished. However, even before their bones are sent back to China, they are moved to make room or forgotten both by their busy relatives and "the history of

[14] Chang, "Melancholic Remains," 118.

exploited labor" that, according to Chang, "is covered over by narratives of progress and national equality" in the "symbolic frameworks of modernity and the U.S. nation-state."[15] In the discourse of U.S. progress and modernity, the oldtimers as undesirable and unassimilable remains of this history must be forgotten. While the cemetery and graves function as venues through which the deceased oldtimers can be remembered, by "moving the dead around," they are consciously removed from the memory of "the history of exploited labor."

Therefore, portraying the psychological bond between Leon and Grandpa Leong through the missing bones is a particularly powerful way through which the novel is engaged in challenging such conscious forgetting. In other words, portraying Leon as haunted by Grandpa Leong's bones, the novel makes Grandpa Leong and his influence ever present and keeps oldtimers living in public memory. In this sense, although Grandpa Leong's missing bones mean bad luck to Leon and affect the way he looks at his own life, the novel gives positive meaning to them as carriers of memory that prevent Grandpa Leong from being forgotten by Leon, his family, and the official history in which Chinese immigrants were exploited laborers.

"In this country, paper is more precious than blood"

Paper is as another important image and bearer of memory in this novel, through which Ng constructs Leon the paper son in multiple but paradoxical ways. Paper, first of all, means Leon's counterfeit immigration paper that grants him U.S. citizenship but legally binds him with Grandpa Leong as his father. His immigration paper also makes him a family man in San Francisco Chinatown but does not give him a sense of belonging. In this novel, paper also refers to the various types of papers Leon keeps all this life. These papers substantiate his existence, time, citizenship, and endeavors in America, but mark him as a captive, failure, and outsider in a hostile, discriminatory society.

The paper with which Leon entered the United States is a type of official memory created by the Immigration Service to certify his legal status as a U.S. citizen. In Leila's narration, Leon always inverts, through a revealing act of forgetting, his paper and real birthdates. When Leon and Leila go to the social security office to apply for his pension, the worker in the office

[15] Chang, "Melancholic Remains," 118.

questions Leon's citizenship:

> He asked Leon why he had so many aliases? So many different dates of birth? Did he have a passport? A birth certificate? A driver's license?
>
> Leon had nothing but his anger, and like a string of firecrackers popping, he started cursing (56).

Here we see Leon, torn between his original and paper identities, fails to remember his paper birth date and to provide the right answer required by the authorities to collect his pension. His anger exposes both his frustration at such a failure and his intention to cover up his secret of entering as a paper son. Leila observes that his anger and cursing also reveal an "oldtimer logic: If you don't tell the truth, you'll never get caught in a lie" (55). In other words, *Bone* does not deny that paper sons entered the country by telling lies, meaning creating fraudulent immigration papers. It is precisely these lies that are used by the dominant discourse to label paper sons, even the whole Chinese immigrant community in general, during the Exclusion Era, as illegal.[16]

However, this does not mean that Ng concurs with the dominant discourse that defines paper sons as illegal immigrants; instead, the memory practices that Leila employs in the novel attest to the legality of Leon's citizenship, and simultaneously points out the sad fact that the evidence of his legal status has been buried deep at the bottom of the dominant discourse as the official memory. In the same chapter, Leila narrates how she searches everywhere in Leon's brick-colored suitcase in which he keeps all his papers:

> I started throwing everything back into the suitcase, I took handfuls of papers up and pitched them back into the suitcase; I wanted to get everything out of sight. That's when I saw the photo of a young Leon, it was right there, Leon's affidavit of identification [:]
>
> The photograph attached hereto and made a part hereof is a recent

[16] Erika Lee Mae Ngai have argued that one of the biggest consequences of the Chinese exclusion acts was the conflation by the immigration officials and mainstream society of Chinese immigration and illegality. See Lee, *At America's Gate*, 223-243; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 223.

> photographic likeness of the aforementioned Lai-On Leong, Date of Birth: November 21, 1924, Port of Entry: San Francisco, is one and the same person as represented by the photograph attached to Certificate of Identity No. 52728 showing his status as a citizen of the United States (60-61).

By describing how much labor Leila puts into looking for the affidavit, Ng reminds readers that Leon's legal status as a U.S. citizenship has long been buried in the U.S. mainstream discourse about paper sons. However, by recording, word by word, the affidavit that exactly resembles the real affidavit of identification certified by the Immigration Service, as commonly seen in immigration files, Ng draws readers' attention to the legality of Leon's status in the United States. While Leon's affidavit contains everything a contemporary official document, such as a passport, needs to support his citizenship—a photograph, a date of birth, a name, and an official statement that he is a citizen, it also records one thing that a passport does not have: a certificate of identity. As I have discussed in Chapter One, although the certificate of identity is the very symbol of racialization because the Chinese during the Exclusion Era was the first and only ethnic group that bore it, this document substantiates Leon's legitimacy as a U.S. citizen.

In addition to documenting his legal status, Leon's immigration paper also perpetually binds him to Grandpa Leong, the only person through whom he can define his existence in America. As stated above, the name "Leon" is part of his paper surname "Leong," implying that Leon makes sense to others only by being a Leong. Even after Grandpa Leong dies, Leon still has to rely on him to define his individual identity. When Mason, Leila's newly wed husband, takes Leon to a cemetery to look for Grandpa Leong's bones, a guard in uniform stops them because the cemetery is not open to "the general public." Mason tells the guard that Leon is not "the general public," but is "looking for his old man." The guard then requires them to show "a piece of paper saying you got people buried here" (73). As Kim argues, Leon is only "the general public" without an "individuate identity" until he can prove that he is Grandpa Leong's son.[17]

[17] Kim, "For a Paper Son, Paper is Blood," 47.

His immigration paper also makes him a family man in the bachelor society of San Francisco Chinatown, but his marriage based on his paper and his job as a seaman turn him into a stranger in this family and virtually a bachelor in Chinatown. Leila recalls the reason why Leon and Mah were married:

> I remember when Mah first told me about Leon. I was six and Mah took me out for dim sun lunch to tell me she was going to marry him.
>
> 'He'll make a suitable husband,' she said. 'One, he's got his papers; two, he works at sea. He'll be away a lot. It'll be just you and me. Like now. I won't have to work so hard, we can take it a little easier' (184).

As a single woman with a child, Mah's marriage to Leon is for survival. His suitability as a husband lies in his citizenship and his job as a merchant seaman that keeps him "away a lot." Mah's envisioning that after their marriage, it will be just her and Leila also indicates that from the very beginning of their marriage, Leon is excluded from the family. Based on "convenience" rather than love, their marriage is fraught with fighting and hurting each other (12). As Leila observes, an old Chinese saying holds that couples "fight at one end of the marriage bed and make up at the other," but Mah and Leon fight "at both ends and the middle" (90). They fight about everything: hardships in life, failed business, Mah's affair with her boss, and Ona's death. After discovering Mah's adultery, Leon moves out to his former room in a bachelor hostel called San Fran and refuses to go home. As Yoonmee Chang argues, Leon, as the male head of his family, is physically and economically absent and virtually "a modern day Chinatown bachelor."[18] Throughout the book, this immigrant marriage of "convenience" is portrayed as full of strife and bitterness. In the United States, paper son Leon has a family but not a home.

Paper in this novel also refers to all kinds of papers Leon collects to prove his existence in the United States. Leon saves "every single scrap of paper": receipts, letters, photographs of his daughters, clippings from newspapers, etc. (58). He fetishizes these papers because:

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[18] Chang, "Chinese Suicide," 95.

> [H]e believed time mattered. Old made good. These letters gained value the way old coins did; they counted the way money counted. All the letters addressed to Leon should prove to the people at the social security office that this country was his place, too. Leon had paid; Leon had earned his rights. American dollars. American time. These letters marked his time and they marked his endurance. Leon was a paper son (58).

Here, as elsewhere, Leila does not simply record what she sees; rather, she reconstructs the image of the *paper* son Leon through layered acts of memory. By comparing the value of paper to the value of money, Leila emphasizes how Leon values these papers. As she narrates at the very beginning of the book, for Leon, "paper is more precious than blood" (9). "Blood" here contains double meanings. It means, first of all, the parent-child biological ties. Through a comparison between paper and blood, Leila suggests that Leon's paper ties with Grandpa Leong are stronger than biological ones. Blood here also means the fluid in the human body that sustains life. This statement thus illustrates how Leon cherishes papers of every kind: like blood, papers also sustain his life. By constructing Leon keeping these papers and giving them value, *Bone* disrupts the official memory of "the history of exploited labor" that treats Leon only as invisible, and demonstrates how Leon uses these papers to substantiate his stay and time and negotiate his identity and existence in the United States.

The various types of papers also document his years of efforts as an individual, husband, and father, giving him multiple identities and countering the stereotypical image of the old, idle bachelors in the Chinese community. On the one hand, Leon is portrayed as a virtual bachelor and seen as one of the "cluster of old guys," "talkers, wanderers, time wasters" in the bachelor society of San Francisco Chinatown (142). On the other hand, the papers also reveal that he is a man of multiple identities: "Leon the family man," "Leon the working man," and "Leon the business schemer" (59). These identities challenge the stereotypical image of old bachelors as what Juliana Chang calls the "illegible" "demetaphorized remains" of U.S. "history of exploited

labor."[19] These papers prove that Leon is an individual who has dreams, who yearns for success, who strives to be a good husband and father, and who has "a heart full of hope" as a man even "with so many failures," as Mah describes him (163).

However, the papers also mark him as a failure and outsider in the country he chooses to make home. In Leon's suitcase, Leila finds a stack of rejection letters:

> The letters were stacked by year and rubberbanded into decades. I only had to open the first few to know the story: "We Don't Want You."
>
> A rejection from the army: unfit.
>
> A job rejection: unskilled.
>
> An apartment: unavailable.
>
> My shoulders tightened and I thought about having a scotch. Leon had made up stories for us; so that we could laugh, so that we could understand the rejections.
>
> The army wanted him but the war ended.
>
> He had job skills and experience: welding, construction and electrical work, but no English.
>
> The apartment was the right size but the wrong neighborhood.
>
> Now, seeing the written reasons in a formal letter, the stories came back, without the humor, without hope. On paper Leon was not the hero (57-8).

These rejection letters and Leon's own interpretations demonstrate that a Chinese immigrant father's endeavor to maintain his image of "hero" through "humor" and "hope" is violently dashed. In the "formal letters" as carriers of the U.S. official memory, Leon is not recorded as a hero but a failure in the United States.

As she digs through the accretion of painful memory represented by Leon's personal archive of papers, Leila then ponders why Leon preserves these documents:

> Maybe Leon should have destroyed these papers. They held a truth about a Leon I

[19] Chang, "Melancholic Remains," 118.

> wasn't sure I wanted to know. Why did he keep every single letter of rejection? Letters saying "We don't want you" were flat worthless to me. What use was knowing the jobs he didn't get, the opportunities he lost? I sorted through the musty papers, the tattered scraps of yellowed notes, the photos. I kept going; I told myself that the right answer, like the right birthdate, had to be written down somewhere (58).

While Leila soon finds Leon's "right birthdate" shown on his affidavit of identification, as discussed earlier, she fails to find the "written" answer to why Leon keeps these letters. The reason will not be written in the U.S. official document on Chinese immigrants, which is why Leon, a born collector, as Leila states at the beginning of the novel, can not find it anywhere. Nor did Leon himself leave the reason in written form, since he authored none of the papers that he has collected. Yet the rejection letters that Leon preserves constitute a personal archive that discloses and contests the practice of racial discrimination against Chinese immigrants pervasive in American society. These letters thus serve as a memory of his experience of exclusion within the United States, which labels itself as "a land of opportunities."

Leila traces Leon's status as a failure and outsider to institutionalized racism in the hostile American society. After Ona dies, Leila notices Leon's resentment towards the exclusive society:

> Leon was looking for someone to blame. All his old bosses. Every coworker that betrayed him. He blamed the whole maritime industry for keeping him out at sea for half his life. Finally he blamed all of America for making big promises and breaking every one. Where was the good job he'd heard about as a young man? Where was the successful business? He'd kept his end of the bargain: he'd worked hard. Two jobs, three. Day and night. Overtime. Assistant laundry presser. Prep cook. Busboy. Waiter. Porter. But where was his happiness? "America," he ranted, "this lie of a country!" (103).

Through Leila's narration here, Ng discloses how "the history of exploited labor" used big

promises such as the United States as the "Gold Mountain" and "land of opportunities" to "pull" paper son immigrants to fill the U.S. domestic labor market and force them to take jobs white Americans scorn to take. She then relentlessly debunks, through Leon's rant, the United States as "this lie of a country."

Leila's memory of Leon's life is powerful because it serves not only to construct Leon's identity as a paper son, but also enables her to find a new identity for herself. After reading the papers Leon collects, Leila finally realizes her responsibility and sees that her mission as his stepdaughter is to remember what Leon experienced in the United States:

> Mason says I'm too much like Leon: I keep everything too, and inside I never let go. I remember everything.
>
> Mason's right. I never forget. I'm the stepdaughter of a paper son and I've inherited this whole suitcase of lies. All of it is mine. All I have is those memories, and I want to remember them all (61).

To Leila, "the whole suitcase of lies" does not only mean the ones Leon makes to enter as a paper son, but more importantly, they refer to the big lie of America as "a land of opportunities" that drew paper sons to enter but denied them those very opportunities. Reading the papers helps Leila realize that her own life is now infused with Leon's blood; she is not just a second-generation Chinese American but also the descendant of a paper son. Therefore, rather than stigmatizing paper children as illegal immigrants, as the U.S. mainstream discourse does, Leila's process of remembering in *Bone* reinvents paper children's identities as inseparable from the genealogies of their descendants. Moreover, Leila the "stepdaughter of a paper son" inherits not only "the suitcase of lies" but also the legacy of her paper-son stepfather. By showing Leila's determination to remember Leon's experience of rejection in the United States, the novel thus calls upon descendants of paper children —who constituted as much as 90 percent of Chinese immigrants before 1965—to remember the struggles of paper children immigrants in "America, this lie of a country" and to pass down this memory.

Moreover, these papers function to allow the reader to remember Leon as a man stuck between the United States and China and between his paper and original selves. Leon's whole life is a tug of war between his paper self that constantly tries but fails in his endeavors to be successful in the alleged "land of opportunities," and his inner self that yearns to return to China. Among the things he keeps are letters from China, "Money-sent-back-to-China receipts," and newspapers from *The Chinese Times,* including "a picture of Confucius, a Japanese soldier with his bayonet aimed at a Chinese woman, ration lines in Canton, gold lines in Shanghai" (59). Besides collecting the Chinese papers, Leon also keeps his private money, what he calls "the Going-back-to China-Fund" (6). His papers thus reveal a man whose heart is drawn to his birth country and whose desires, like his multiple identities, must always remain a secret. Indeed, the thought of going back never leaves him and often haunts him in difficult situations. When Leila tells Leon about Ona's death, he "roar[s] at the room, at the four walls," and "[goes] into his variation on three or four themes," the first being going back to China (148). Leon's original family is never mentioned in the novel, nor is anything that gives a sense of his original identity back in China. His yearning thus becomes both abstract and unreal. As Leila comments, he "never intended to stay. But fifty years later, here he was, caught in his own lie; the laws that excluded him now held him captive" (57). Therefore, through these paper, Ng exposes the contradiction of exclusion and captivity that the Chinese exclusion acts created for Leon: being excluded from entry, Leon has to come as a paper son, but once entering the United States by cutting off his ties with his original self and country of birth, he becomes, in actuality, a captive.

"Our memories…count to keep them from becoming strangers"

Besides utilizing bone and paper as bearers of memory, Ng also makes memory, especially Leila's memory of Grandpa Leong, vital to the construction of the bonds of blood and paper that unite the Leong family. Through two non-blood parent-child relationships—Grandpa Leong and Leon as well as Leon and Leila—Ng denaturalizes biological ties in family formation while constructing the Leong family made of paper, bone, memory, and time.

Although most immigration novels contain memories, *Bone* departs from the traditions of this genre by cutting off all family ties with China, the old world, and constructing Grandpa Leong as the originator of the family.[20] Leila's memory of her family is constrained exclusively to their lives in the United States. As Leila narrates, "Our Grandpa Leong lived his last days at the San Fran, so it's an important place for us. In this country, the San Fran is our family's oldest place, our beginning place, our new China" (4). Here Leila traces the place where Grandpa Leong spent his last days as the starting point of their family and views him as the beginning of her family tree. While Grandpa Leong's bones and his wish to have them sent to China present a haunting memory of China from the past, his missing bones also signify that the family's ties with China are forever lost. In this sense, Leon's immigration paper not only provides him citizenship and a family in the United States, but also creates a new starting point for his family. In other words, for both Leon the paper son and the Leong paper family, "paper is more precious than blood" (9).

In this novel, memory is a vital maker of family. Leila's narration is filled with memories of her deceased family members, mostly Ona but sometimes Grandpa Leong. Her memory of Grandpa Leong is composed of everyday fragments a granddaughter might have about her grandfather: the family visiting him in Sacramento where he worked on a farm; the family pictures taken outside his shack; and meals the girls send to him in San Fran. Leila tells why memories of Ona and Grandpa Leong matter: "Our memories can't bring Grandpa Leong or Ona back, but they count to keep them from becoming strangers" (89). This statement conveys several meanings. First, by listing Ona, her half-sister, or the one with whom she has blood ties, with Grandpa Leong, Leila blurs the line between blood and paper ties. Second, Grandpa Leong, like Ona, is not a stranger but a family member. While death claims them and has the power to turn them into strangers, memories continue to make them part of her family. Therefore, even though Grandpa Leong is dead for years, he is still remembered by Leila as part of her family.

[20] In Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, for example, the narration was full of memories back in China.

Leila's memory of Grandpa Leong's funeral further makes him part of this family. When Grandpa Leong dies, Leon is off at sea, so the responsibility of burying Grandpa Leong falls to his wife who fulfills Leon's role as a filial son. Although in her heart, Mah considers him neither her father-in-law nor "a blood relation," and she does not want to "wear hemp and weep for a show," she still arranges for the funeral and leads her three daughters to act as the only filial descendants of Grandpa Leong (79). She is worried about how to prepare a proper funeral for him: "Should we have a wake, too? What kind of coffin? Should it be open or shut? What to write on the gravestone? How to pick a burial site? Was Nina too young to go? Should we all wear hemp? Who would sing the lament songs? Should we hire a professional mourner?" (79-80). These questions, all from the perspective of a filial daughter-in-law, sketch a traditional Chinese funeral, in which paying respect to the deceased and showcasing descendants' filial piety are equally important. As Vincent Brown argues, preparation of death rites reinforces the "significance of kinship and friendship."[21] Grandpa Leong's funeral thus both manifests to the Chinese community that Leon and his family are his descendants and reinforces the kinship formed through Leon's paper. In this sense, *Bone* challenges the assumption that paper families are fake and demonstrates that the kinship formed through Leon's paper serves substantial familial, social, and cultural functions in Chinatown.

However, Grandpa Leong's funeral also demonstrates how an oldtimer ends up lonely and pitiful. In the same way that Leon's paper gives him a family but not a home, this paper relationship makes Grandpa Leong part of Leon's family, but does not change his status as a bachelor in Chinatown. Indeed, Ng constructs San Francisco's Chinatown as a community full of old, lonely bachelors and Grandpa Leong one among them. Leila describes Grandpa Leong as anything but a family man:

> If Grandpa Leong had been a family man, he might have had real tears, a grieving wife draped in muslin, the fabric weaving around her like burnt skin. The

[21] Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (London, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 61-2, 73.

> wife might have wailed, chanting the lament songs. Other women, older aunts, might have had to support her at the elbows, ready to pull her back if she tried to throw herself on the coffin. Brothers and cousins and in-laws might have all come, everybody weak, everybody woeful. They would have argued about which was the luckiest burial plot. Facing east? Facing west! Over the years, they would have spied on each other—who visited the grave on the Ghost Festival? [H]ow much grave food was offered? [H]ow much paper money was burned? They would have counted each other's oranges. Hopefully—and there was hope if there were children—when his children were grown and making their own money, they'd dig up his bones, pack them in a clay pot, send them—no, accompany them—back to the home village for a proper burial (82).

Through this vivid, detailed imagery of what Grandpa Leong's funeral would be like if he had a wife, extended family members, and children—or biological children, as she suggests here—Leila points out the sad fact that as a lonely bachelor in Chinatown, Grandpa Leong's farewell to the world ends up quiet and abject. Also, even with Mah functioning as a filial daughter-in-law, Grandpa Leong's funeral is hardly "proper": his "makeshift" coffin looks "cheap"; the old-time attendants show up but leave immediately, saying that they have to "go back to work" (80). Through Grandpa Leong's funeral, Ng thus displays a nuanced picture of a paper family formed during the Exclusion Era. On the one hand, the family is significant for both the paper son and the paper father; on the other hand, both Leon and Grandpa Leong lead/led bachelors' lives, though to different degrees. In this sense, no matter how powerful the bonds constructed between fictive kin are, family formation through paper relationship did not substantively change the nature of San Francisco's Chinatown as a bachelor society.[22]

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[22] Although scholars, such as Sucheng Chan, Mary Ting Lui, and John Kuo Wei Tchen have challenged the assumption that Chinatown was a bachelor society, Ng portrays, with great sympathy, San Francisco Chinatown as a community full of old bachelors. See Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery*, 144-5, 155-157; John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, 160-1; Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil*, 103.

Besides Grandpa Leong and Leon, this novel also foregrounds the non-blood, father-child relationship between Leon and Leila, through which Ng further denaturalizes kinship formed through blood ties. This does not mean that Leon's relationship with Leila is emotionally closer than his relationship with his biological daughters Ona and Nina. As discussed above, Ona is the closest to Leon among the three daughters. Leila also insists that Leon is her stepfather rather than her father: when Tommie Hom, Mah's boss and former lover, reminds Leila that Leon loves her like a father, she corrects him to say that Leon is her stepfather (115). However, Leila is the only daughter who remains in the Leong family, taking on the role of a mediator between Leon and Mah as well as between Leon and American society, and of the narrator, memory keeper, and inheritor of the legacy of this paper/immigrant family. In other words, without sons in the family and with two biological daughters absent, either through death or moving to New York, Leila becomes Leon's heir carrying on the responsibility of caring for the family and inheriting the most valuable part of Leon's property—his suitcase of papers. In this sense, *Bone* constructs the non-blood ties between Leon and Leila as more important than biological ones in this family.

Moreover, through the two "fictive" parent-child relationships, Ng also suggests that what makes an immigrant family is not blood but time. In addition to proving Leon's paper relationship with Grandpa Leong as essential in his life and his family, time also transforms Leila's relationship with Leon as surpassing her relationship with her biological father. After Leila marries Mason secretly in New York and returns to San Francisco, the first person she wants to tell is Leon: "He's not my real father, but he's the one who's been there for me. Like he always told me, it's time that makes a family, not just blood" (3). By saying that Leon is not her "real father," Leila reminds readers that she has "a real father," or biological father, Lyman Fu who has abandoned her and her mother and who is far away in Australia and shows little concern about her. Leon is thus more real to her as a father, who accompanies her growing up throughout the years. Therefore, in addition to memory, time functions as another maker of this immigrant family.

However, in this novel, time and memory hold a complex relationship, through which Ng reveals the complexity of this immigrant/paper family. On the one hand, memory mediates, ruptures, and manipulates time. As discussed above, Leila's memory manipulates time to reinvent her family history not from China but from Leon's paper. Moreover, Ona's broken bones symbolize that time is cut into two halves by Leila's memory of her death. As Leila narrates, "[f]or me, it was as if time broke down: Before and After Ona jumped" (15). On the other hand, time filters out bad memories and sutures memories ruptured by trauma and disloyalty to repair the broken family. In this family full of struggle and strife, escape and betrayal are prominent themes. While Ona's suicide and Nina's moving out can be read both as their means of escape from the family and Chinatown and as betrayals of their parents, another two betrayals are far more devastating to the family. One is Leon's disloyalty to Grandpa Leong, resulting in Grandpa Leong's bones going missing forever and Leon's life being permanently affected. The other is Mah's adultery with her boss that leads to Leon's moving out of the family and turning him into a virtual bachelor. However, while Leon's haunting memory of the missing bones and Leila's memory of Grandpa Leong play a vital role in compensating Leon's betrayal and continuing to make Grandpa Leong part of the family, time plays the key role in repairing Leon's relationship with Mah. Their relationship recovers little by little, and time finally proves that Mah loves Leon, as Leila reveals at the end of the book. In this sense, both memory and time function as vital makers of the Leong paper family.

Through memory, time, paper, and bone, Ng paints a nuanced picture of an immigrant family formed in the Exclusion Era. Despite the exclusion acts that intended to bar Chinese from entry and to eliminate Chinese families within the United States, Chinese families have survived and thrived, as Ng suggests in her construction of the Leong family. The family is formed through economic transactions and convenience, and suffers generational and marital conflicts, strife, and betrayals. Yet this family composed of paper and blood is not fake at all, but functions well in San Francisco's Chinatown and carries on the paper-son legacy to future generations.

Conclusion

As Goellnicht observes, "[w]ith bitter irony, paper turns out to be more powerful than blood in America."[23] In the first two chapters, I have illustrated how paper children immigration generated de facto adoptive relationship between paper children and their paper families and created fictive kinship in the Chinese immigrant community during the Exclusion Era. Chapter One draws a group picture of how such a fictive kinship was formed in the social, historical context of adoption practices in feudal China and the hostile environment in the United States. Chapter Two dissects the Leong family portrayed in *Bone* and demonstrates how the paper relationship influences not only the paper son Leon but also his descendants, and redefines the nature of the Leong paper family.

The exclusion acts were repealed in 1943 when the United States tried to bolster its solidarity with China during WWII, but due to the annual national quota of 105, the door to the United States was still closed to most Chinese. Paper children immigration thus persisted and continued to generate de facto adoption until 1965 when the new Immigration Act repealed the quota. Simultaneously, however, another group of young immigrants entered the country, this time as legally adopted children of Americans. The adoption of this group also started a convention in which transnational adoption of Chinese children served as a site of power and media contestations between different political entities as complicated by individuals, as my next chapter will illustrate.

[23] Goellnicht, "Of Bones and Suicide," 305.

CHAPTER 3

Cold War Adoption from Hong Kong: A Site of U.S.-Anglo (Colonial) Power Contestations and an Alternative Path for Chinese Immigration

On January 16, 1958, J.W. S. Corbett, British Consulate in Honolulu, wrote to the Hong Kong Colonial Secretary inquiring after the age limit of a child to be adopted in the colony. He made this inquiry because a couple in Honolulu "was anxious to adopt a 'child' aged 20," a female refugee from China currently living in Hong Kong and who "was apparently herself willing to be adopted by the prospective parents." The Colonial Secretary replied on February 11 that the maximum age was 21, and if the director of the Hong Kong Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was satisfied about the home conditions and suitability of the adoptive parents, the girl could be authorized to leave for Honolulu with "the assurance from the American authorities that they would permit the girl to enter the territory."[1]

Whether the twenty-year-old "child" was finally adopted into this Honolulu family is unknown, but her story both resembles and differs from paper children immigration/adoption during the Exclusion Era. On the one hand, it is highly likely that the couple had some relationship with the "child" and that they were of Chinese ancestry as well, since many overseas Chinese in Hawaii sought to adopt children from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s.[2] Like paper children immigration/adoption in which most Chinese entered the United States during the Exclusion Era as children of paper families, to which many of the paper children were already related, the twenty-year-old "child" may have sought to enter as the adopted child of a couple she already knew. On the other hand, unlike paper children during the Exclusion Era who entered as

[1] Letter from J.W. S. Corbett, British Consulate in Honolulu to the Colonial Secretary on January 16, 1958, HKRS No. GR 3/3371/55, Hong Kong Public Records Building.

[2] Hong Kong newspapers, for instance, *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, often reported that Chinese orphans were adopted by overseas Chinese in Hawaii. See "Fenling Guer Ji Xiulian Huo Tandao Huaqiao Shouyang, Yiju Nanmin Jiuji An Fumei"粉嶺孤兒紀秀蓮獲檀島華僑收養，依據難民救濟案赴美[Fanling Orphan Ji Xiulian Was Adopted by Overseas Chinese in Honolulu and will Go to the United States cccording to Refugee Relief Act], *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, August 26, 1956; "Baoliangju San Ertong Lianmei Feimei Yingling, Baoliangju Zhuxi Zengbi Liunian"保良局三兒童聯袂飛美應領，保良局主席贈筆留念[Three Children from the Bureau of Social Welfare Fly to America for Adoption. Director of the Bureau Gives Them Pens as a Memory], *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, February 2, 1957.

de facto adoptees of their paper families, the girl has the option to immigrate through legal adoption procedures. Between 1943 when the exclusion acts were repealed and 1965 when the new Immigration Act abolished the quota of 105 for Chinese nationals, paper children immigration/adoption remained a major path for Chinese immigration.[3] However, in the 1950s and 1960s, legal, rather than de facto, adoption by American families, primarily of Chinese ancestry, provided another venue through which Chinese birth families sent their children to the United States for immigration.

This chapter examines U.S adoption of Chinese children from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. I demonstrate that Cold War adoption from Hong Kong was not simply about personal choices and what Catherine Ceniza Choy labels "global family making," but served as an instrument of U.S. anti-Communist Cold War politics and a site of power contestations between the United States and Britain as represented by the Hong Kong Colonial government.[4][5] Adoption functioned as an ideological apparatus through which the United States displayed its moral and political superiority over Communist China and imperialist Britain. It also provided an alternative channel of immigration through which some Chinese birth families sent their children to the United States for a better life in a period when conventional immigration was not possible for most Chinese. Moreover, U.S. adoption of Chinese orphans and the Chinese refugee problem behind it exposed the difficult dilemmas Britain faced as an old empire while simultaneously offering Britain a platform to exhibit its responsibility and humanitarianism toward refugees and orphans in its colony. Therefore, While Cold War adoption from Hong Kong was the production

[3] Mae Ngai, "Legacies of Exclusion," 8.
[4] Choy, *Global Families,* 6.
[5] It is not my intention to equate the Hong Kong Colonial government with the British government. There are obvious differences between the two in their policies towards both the global powers (such as the United States) and local powers (referring to the Nationalist Taiwan and the Communist China). For instance, viewing the Anglo-American alliance as more important than its interest in Hong Kong, the British government sometimes chose to sacrifice the interest of the colony, but the Colonial government was more concerned with the territory. See Tracy Steel, "Hong Kong and the Cold War in the 1950s," in *Hong Kong in the Cold War*, ed. Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 97. However, as I will analyze later, in most cases the British government and the Colonial government did take very similar stance in their relations with the United States and the two Chinese powers. I thus argue that, in terms of adoption of Chinese children to the United States as well as the issue of Chinese refugees behind, the Colonial government could represent the British government.

of the Cold War geopolitical rivalry between the two powers, which produced competitive and contradictory discourses surrounding Chinese orphans, some birth parents took advantage of this rivalry to circumvent the still restrictive U.S. immigration policy and to create legal means of immigration for their children.

I analyze both U.S. and Hong Kong cultural texts in the 1950s and 1960s, including newspaper articles and Hong Kong governmental documents collected from the Hong Kong Public Records Building. I show that although the majority of American adoptive parents were Chinese Americans, U.S. mainstream newspapers constructed the narrative of U.S. exceptionalism by highlighting sensational stories of happy white middle-class families embracing lucky Hong Kong orphans and by erasing the traces of other Western orphan-receiving countries. Hong Kong newspapers, by contrast, minimized the influence of white American families, highlighted Chinese American adoptive families, and foregrounded other Western nations, especially those from the British Commonwealth, as receiving countries. Meanwhile, Hong Kong newspapers highlighted how orphans were well-fed and well-dressed before stepping out of the colony and sporadically provided alternative U.S. adoption stories, such as orphans being adopted by prisoners, that were totally erased from U.S. newspapers.

Drawing upon Amy Kaplan's idea of "manifest domesticity," I emphasize how in U.S. mainstream media coverage, American white, middle-class housewives played a central role as adoptive mothers welcoming and embracing Chinese orphans. Amy Kaplan argues that between the 1830s and 1850s, a period of U.S. continental expansion, American women, both within and outside the United States, functioned as "the Empire of the mother" and "the Empire of affections and the heart," and became "the engine of national expansion, the site from which the nation reaches beyond itself through the emanation of women's moral influence."[6] Although Hong Kong in the Cold War is different from the Texas of the 1840s in which Kaplan contextualizes her research, her analysis of "manifest domesticity" applies to the Cold War era.

[6] Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire*, 29, 42, 43.

First of all, the Cold War era, like the antebellum period, was another period of U.S. expansion, in which the United States attempted to restructure global relations and extend its hegemonic power and influence under the discourse of U.S. exceptionalism and within the global context of decolonization.

Moreover, the ideology of "separate spheres" and the "cult of domesticity" prevailing in American society in the first half of the nineteenth century were revived vigorously in U.S. Cold War political discourse, with its advocacy of suburban middle-class families and rigid gender roles. To be sure, the ideology of domesticity differed in the two periods. For instance, the "cult of domesticity" in the Victorian age emphasized the "cleanliness" and "refinement" of middle-class families as distinguished from the "dirty" others in the colonized world.[7] The ideology of domesticity during the Cold War, however, was incorporated in the process of "sentimental modernization" that emphasized nurturing and educating "backward people" and exerting white women's influence through "the power of love and the tools of culture."[8] Nevertheless, in both periods, the ideology of domesticity foregrounded white, middle-class American women's maternal role and moral influence in U.S. expansion. Furthermore, in both periods, the U.S. middle-class family functioned as the "mobile and mobilizing outpost that transformed conquered foreign lands into the domestic sphere of the family and nation."[9] In other words, in the early Cold War era, adoption of Hong Kong children allowed white middle-class housewives to incorporate the foreign land of Hong Kong into the American domestic sphere of home and nation.

Cold War adoption from Hong Kong is situated in the larger picture of Chinese refugee problems in Hong Kong and the quadrangled relations among the United States, Britain, Nationalist Taiwan, and Communist China. I will first discuss Hong Kong's geopolitical

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[7] See Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, & U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), 231-232.
[8] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 201.
[9] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire*, 25.

significance in these quadrangled relations, and explore how the Chinese refugee problem exemplified the complex relations of the four powers in the Cold War context. I then analyze U.S. and Hong Kong newspaper representations concerning U.S. adoption of Hong Kong children and discuss how both sides portrayed themselves, each other, China, and Chinese orphans; what ideologies were produced and circulated; and how these representations built upon the old empire and the new hegemony in Hong Kong. Drawing upon Choy's analysis of archives from ISS-USA and my research on Hong Kong newspapers, I also analyze how some Chinese birth families turned adoption into an alternative path to immigration for their children, and how this pattern resembled the paper children immigration/adoption discussed in previous chapters.[10]

Hong Kong in the Early Cold War and "The Problem of People"

Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s was a Cold War battlefield between Communist China and "the free world" led by the United States, and an imperial battlefield between the desire of the U.S. to extend its influence in Asia, and Britain's desire to maintain the status quo. It was also an unfinished civil war battlefield between Nationalist Taiwan and Communist China. This already complex situation was further complicated by the Korean War and the Taiwan Strait Crisis, as well as by other events, such as the U.S. control of exports from China and the contention between Taiwan and China over a seat in the United Nations. Tuong Vu observes that "the plays on Asian stages embedded both Cold War and local plots, both global and local actors, who interplayed in various ways depending on particular contexts."[11] Hong Kong in the early Cold War era typified these Asian stages. Moreover, Hong Kong's geopolitical significance to the four powers structured the entanglement of the Chinese refugee problem, or what the 1956 Hong Kong governmental annual report labeled as "the problem of people."[12]

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[10] Due to my failed attempts to look for information about Chinese birth parents in my archival research in Hong Kong, I had to rely on stories and letters of the birth parents contained in Choy's research. With this limitation, I was not able to present a more detailed account of how they negotiated their children's opportunities of immigration to the United States.

[11] Tuong Vu, "Cold War Studies and Cold War in Asia," in *Dynamics of the Cold War in Asia: Ideology, Identity, and Culture*, ed., Tuong Vu and Wasana Wongsurawat (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 12.

[12] Chi-Kwan Mark, "'The Problem of People': British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949-1962." *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 6 (2007): 1145-1181.

The history of Britain's colonization of Hong Kong, its loss during WWII, and its postwar reclamation of control provides a glimpse into the decline of the former sun-never-sets empire. Britain acquired sovereignty over Hong Kong in three stages over half a century: Hong Kong Island in the First Opium War in 1842, Kowloon Peninsula and Stonecutters Island in the Second Opium War in 1860, and the New Territories and some small islands nearby in 1898.[13] During WWII, Hong Kong was occupied by Japan, and when Japan surrendered, Britain and Nationalist China, led by Chiang Kai-shek, competed to take over Hong Kong. At the Yalta Conference held in February 1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt "urged Britain to return Hong Kong to China speedily." However, after his death, President Harry Truman showed more sympathy toward Britain and insisted that Britain maintain its sovereignty in Hong Kong on the condition that the Colonial government was "in conformity with American interests."[14] On the issue of Hong Kong, as on many other issues, Britain turned into what Chi-Kwan Mark calls "the junior partner in the Anglo-American alliance," and only through the United States could Britain regain the sovereignty of Hong Kong.

As a Crown Colony of the British empire, Hong Kong's significance to Britain was evident. As Andrew J. Whitfield argues, Hong Kong was key to Britain's ability to retain its Far Eastern empire and losing it would set a precedent for its other colonies.[15] After the second world war, the empire's other Asian colonies, such as India, gained independence, so keeping Hong Kong was even more important to Britain's prestige as an old empire. The importance of Hong Kong to Britain can be also seen through an economic lens. Starting from 1885, Hong Kong had been the third largest shipping market for the British empire. Due to the colony's economic and trade value, maintaining domination of Hong Kong would be "a particular advantage to the empire."[16]

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[13] Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations, 1949-1957* (Oxford, GB: Glarendon Press, 2004), 12.
[14] Francis Yi-hua Kan, "The Position of Hong Kong in Britain's Policy towards the Two Rival Chinese Regimes during the Early Years of the Cold War," *Civil Wars* 2, no. 4 (Winter, 1999): 114.
[15] Andrew J. Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War, 1941-1945* (Palgrave: 2001), 1-3.
[16] Kan, "The Position of Hong Kong," 113.

The United States also viewed Hong Kong as economically and politically significant. The U.S. long-term interests in Hong Kong can be traced back to the late 1830s, when some large American trading companies pulled out of the opium trade in the seas near Hong Kong.[17] The United States was also Hong Kong's second largest trade partner (the first was Britain).[18] In the early Cold War years, the United States viewed Hong Kong primarily through a Cold War lens. As China fell into the hands of the Communists, the United States saw Hong Kong as an outpost in Asia through which to gather intelligence and control exports against China and as a window through which to propagate anti-Communist ideologies in Southeast Asia.[19]

For Nationalist Taiwan and Communist China, Hong Kong was a site of contestation and an extended civil war battlefield. Both attempted to claim Hong Kong in the name of anti-imperialism and against each other. Communist China viewed Hong Kong as an outpost to marginalize the Nationalist influence and as "a window to Southeast Asia, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Western World." Hong Kong also served as a "communication center" between China and Communists in Southeast Asia, through, for instance, several pro-Communist newspapers in Hong Kong, such as *Wen Wei Po, Ta Kung Po,* and Xinhua New Agency, Hong Kong branch.[20] The Nationalists were also actively involved in Pro-Nationalist media, trade unions, and teachers' organizations, and saw Hong Kong as an outpost through which they could retrieve the lost China. However, for the Colonial government, the real and impending threat to Hong Kong came from China since Taiwan was rather weak. According to Francis Yi-hua Kan, the Governor of Hong Kong used the metaphor of "a pot on the stove" to describe the relations between China and Hong Kong—"Hong Kong was the pot, capable of being brought to the boil at the will of CCP (Chinese Communist Party)."[21]

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[17] Richard M. Mueller, "America's Long-term Interest in Hong Kong," in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 547, The Future of Hong Kong (Sep. 1996), 151.
[18] Kan, "The Position of Hong Kong," 115.
[19] Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 216-217. Lu Xun, "The American Cold War in Hong Kong, 1949-1960: Intelligence and Propaganda," in *Hong Kong in the Cold War*, ed. Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 123.
[20] Roberts, 32; Kan, "The Position of Hong Kong," 130.
[21] Kan, "The Position of Hong Kong," 132.

Under pressure from the United States and the two Chinese rivals, and determined to preserve its own economic and military power, Britain tried to maintain the status quo of Hong Kong by taking a neutral, balancing stance. Unlike the United States, which never changed its position of supporting the Nationalists, Britain recognized both the Nationalists and the Communists. In June 1949, right before the Chinese civil war ended, the British Minister of Defense announced in Hong Kong that his government intended to "maintain the friendliest possible relations with whatever government the Chinese people might choose."[22] By doing so, Britain hoped to maintain its control over the colony as long as possible. In January 1950, Britain became the first Western country to recognize the newly founded People's Republic. In order not to irritate the PRC, Britain also minimized the impact of the Cold War in Hong Kong by taking the role of "reluctant allies" and "semi-allies" of the United States, though it had to depend upon the latter to contain Communist influence in Europe.[23] The Colonial government took a similar neutral stance, though it was more practical and more concerned with the needs of the colony than the British government. In sum, as Chi-Kwan Mark comments, due to its own vulnerability, the old empire was faced with difficult dilemmas concerning Hong Kong throughout the 1950s.[24]

The dilemma faced by the British and the Colonial governments is fully exemplified in their attitudes toward the issue of Chinese refugees. Starting from 1949, mainland Chinese poured into Hong Kong, creating a refugee problem, and subsequently the relinquishment of Chinese children, a pressing issue for the Colonial government. Migration between the Chinese in Hong Kong and the mainland was common. During the period when Japan occupied Hong Kong, approximately one million Hong Kong Chinese entered the mainland due to forced expulsion by Japanese soldiers or voluntary escape, and by the end of WWII, only a small population of 600,000 remained in Hong Kong. In 1946, Hong Kong's population regained its prewar status of 1.6 million, and in 1956, it grew to 2.5 million.[25] The problem of population

[22] Kan, "The Position of Hong Kong," 119.
[23] Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 224.
[24] Ibid., 7.
[25] Mark, "'The Problem of People,'" 1145-1181.

continued to worsen. According to the Governmental Information Service, Hong Kong's population reached 3 million in 1959, more than one million of whom were newcomers from the mainland.[26] The influx of Chinese refugees also produced numerous abandoned children, whose number, as a *South China Morning Post* article laments, was "greater than ever before."[27]

With the continuous influx of people from the mainland, the Colonial government's attitude towards the new immigrants underwent tremendous changes. The government initially viewed the newcomers as "illegal immigrants" temporarily residing in the colony. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the extension of social welfare to new immigrants "was kept to a minimum, for instance, by caring for only the most vulnerable groups and taking remedial actions on an ad hoc basis."[28] However, the 1956 governmental annual report started to replace the term "illegal immigrants" with "refugees," signaling the government's realization that the new immigrants were not leaving the island, that still more would come, and that it would have to bear the burden of resettlement. As Chi-Kwan Mark observes, the two terms were not used "in a legal sense but as a mechanism for inclusion and exclusion."[29] In other words, the change from "illegal immigrants" to "refugees" conveyed how the government's attitude towards the Chinese from the mainland shifted from exclusion to inclusion. Indeed, from 1957, the government began to integrate the newcomers into Hong Kong society.

That the Colonial government acknowledged the Chinese from the mainland as refugees in 1957, almost ten years after the first group poured into the colony, reflects the dilemma faced by the Colonial government and the British empire behind it. On the one hand, the government was so overwhelmed by the number of refugees in the colony that external aid from other Western countries, especially the United States, was badly needed. On the other hand, it was also worried that too much aid from the United States would undermine the old empire's international image

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[26] "Integrating Hong Kong's One Million Refugees." This is one of the introductions to official photographs issued by the Hong Kong Government Information Services from 1957 to 1959. See HKRS 365-1-24-20, Hong Kong Public Records Building.
[27] "Abandoned Babies in Hong Kong: More Now Retrieved from Streets Than Ever Previously," *South China Morning Post,* January 18, 1958.
[28] Mark, "The Problem of People," 1149.
[29] Ibid., 1148.

and incur U.S. intervention in the British sphere of influence in Hong Kong as well as elsewhere in Asia. In other words, acknowledging the newcomers as refugees meant that the government was open to outside aid from the "free world," but it had to cautiously protect its own imperial prestige. On June 4,1959, the *China Mail,* a pro-governmental English newspaper in Hong Kong, reports that Hong Kong was looking forward to receiving donations of $40 million from the Western world. However, the author continues, "[o]ur annual expenditure on refugees is about five times that amount, so that even if we get as much as we hope for, the benefit will be slight…. The Colony has to stress that as long as the refugees remain in Hong Kong they must continue to be a local responsibility."[30] The article conveys a clear message to the world that financial aid from the Western world played only a minor role in refugee resettlement and that the government had both the moral responsibility and ability to take care of refugees in the colony.

The Colonial government's paradoxical attitude towards Chinese refugees is also seen in relation to the question of whether the large number of abandoned children appearing in the colony during this period were refugees, as reflected in the correspondence between the director of DSW, D.W.B. Baron and the director of ISS-Hong Kong Marjorie Montelius. On January 23, 1962, Montelius wrote to Baron requesting that the Department confirm the "refugee state" of the abandoned children. She said that ISS was very aware that there was "no accepted definition of 'refugee' in Hong Kong and that it was most difficult to apply this term to children abandoned without any clue to their background." Montelius made the request because the headquarters of the Refugee and Migration Unit (R.M.U.) of the American Consulate General in Washington, from which "the greatest part of [ISS-Hong Kong] budget" was given, issued their financial support only to refugees. Baron replied that "in view of the great influx of individuals and families from China who were not pre-war residents of Hong Kong, the presumption must be that the majority of abandoned children are the children of refugees."[31] Baron's response reveals

[30] "Help for HK," *China Mail*, on June 4, 1959.
[31] Letters between the director of ISS-Hong Kong, Marjorie Montelius and the director of DSW, D.W. B. Baron concerning

the government's willingness to confirm the abandoned children as refugees in order to receive aid from America through R.M.U., though it was still reluctant to so define them.

Besides exposing the difficult dilemma that the Colonial government faced, the Chinese refugee problem also demonstrates how the U.S.-led "free world" used the issue to bolster anti-Communist ideologies against China. On June 17, 1959, the United Press International reported that 33 non-Communist nations in the United Nations started a one-year campaign for world refugees from July 1, 1959 to June 1, 1960 by naming the year as World Refugee Year. According to the article, only the Soviet Bloc voted against the World Refugee Year Resolution, because "the big majority of today's refugees fled from Communist countries." The article further states that the United States had already "begun an intensive drive to raise money and to resettle refugees in America" with the blessing of President Eisenhower and the leadership of Rev. Francis B. Sayre, grandson of President Woodrow Wilson and son of a former U.S. High Commissioner to the Philippines.[32] Clearly, the United States was highly engaged in helping the refugees. On the next day, according to the Associated Press, Washington announced plans to "embark special sums to help refugees around the world," as "a prod to other countries to get going on the refugee problem, too." The "prod" meant $4,000,000 US dollars, including $200,000 for "Chinese fleeing to Hong Kong from the Bamboo Curtain."[33] Both articles highlight the United States as the main driver of the campaign. Using "prod" as a metaphor for the $4,000,000, the Associated Press article also implies that the United States, as the leader of the "free world" would prod or urge other nations to follow suit. Both articles also emphasize the refugees as escaping from Communist nations, and the coined term of "Bamboo Curtain"—a combination of Iron Curtain, referring to Communist nations during the Cold War, and bamboo as the symbol of China—specifically denotes Communist China as the producer of the "problem of people" in Hong Kong.

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whether the orphans should be identified as "refugees." File No. 41-1-9597, Hong Kong Public Records Building.

[32] Ralph Teatsorth, "World Refugee Year: 33 Non-Communist Nations Open Drive to Aid World Refugees," *Hong Kong Standard*, June 17, 1959.

[33] "American Aid for Refugees: Spur to Others to Follow," *South China Morning Post*, June 20, 1959.

Under such circumstances, the Colonial government's incorporation of the new immigrants into Hong Kong society harbored its own political purpose of detaching the colony from the Cold War. As Chi-Kwan Mark argues, the Colonial government was fully aware that the Chinese refugees had "instrumental value" to all three parties, the United States, Nationalist Taiwan, and Communist China, and only by integrating the refugees into Hong Kong society could the Colony solve "the problem of people" without getting itself involved in the Cold War. For the United States, helping these refugees was "a psychological weapon" to counter the Communist criticism of U.S. racism and to exhibit its humanitarian sympathy for Chinese refugees and its superiority over both Communist China and the old British empire. For Nationalist Taiwan, the influx of Chinese refugees to Hong Kong was "illustrative of the tyranny" of the "evil" Communist China, and showing concern for the refugees was Taiwan's responsibility as part of the "free world." Communist China also used refugees as a rationale for intervention. China constantly reminded Hong Kong that it would "intervene on behalf of the Chinese nationals," if the Colonial government did not treat the refugees properly.[34] Therefore, by integrating Chinese refugees into the local population, the Colonial government carefully avoided the involvement of all three parties.

More importantly, integration also provided the Colonial government with a platform to demonstrate to the world that it had the moral integrity, the ability, and the will to care for the refugees. We see one example of this in a series of photographs taken between 1957 and the end of the 1960s under the direction of the Department of Government Information Services with the "dual purpose of bringing material of local topical interest together and making it available for distribution to newspapers and other publishing agencies in HK and overseas."[35] The group of refugee photos included in this series specifically displays how the Colonial government took care of the refugees, particularly abandoned children, and how it integrated refugees into Hong

[34] Mark, "The Problem of People," 1154, 1156,
[35] According to the introduction to the series on the website of Hong Kong Public Records, accessed August, 17, 2017, http://search.grs.gov.hk/PRO/srch/english/show_detail.jsp?recordkey=611073&source=Y&srchscreen=sys_all&version=internet.

Kong society by improving housing, medical, and educational conditions, and more importantly, by taking care of refugee children's physical as well as spiritual needs.

A group of photos under the title of "Social Welfare in Hong Kong," for instance, shows how refugee children were properly fed, dressed, educated, and entertained with musical instruments and other activities. The introduction to this group of photos states that social welfare in Hong Kong "must at all times be viewed against the background of the population problem and the influx of 1,000,000 refugees from China between 1949 and 1959" that "inevitably" increased the numbers of people unable to support their families and of children being abandoned. However, there was no need for anybody to be "in dire want" because DSW and more than 100 voluntary agencies "cover[ed] the Colony in a most effective manner."[36] In other words, while attributing the refugee problem to China, the Colonial government claimed that it could protect any refugee in the colony from want. One picture captures a blind beggar sitting and begging on the curb of a street (figure 3.1). Behind him is a little boy holding a big bowl. While the picture might imply that disabled people were left homeless and led miserable lives in the colony, the caption states that "there is no more pathetic sight than a blind beggar and fortunately it is a rare sight in the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong."[37] While admitting that the scene occurred in the colony, the caption writer claimed that such scenes were not common because the Colonial government took good care of its refugees.

[36] Hong Kong Public Records. File No. 365-1-24-17.
[37] Ibid.

Figure 3.1 A blind beggar and a little boy on the street of Hong Kong, 1958. Hong Kong Public Records Office.

According to the photographs, in addition to the refugee children's physical well-being, their spiritual needs were part of the government's concern. One group of photos taken in 1964, entitled "a Fairyland on Every Street for Hong Kong Children," portrays how a "unique" institution, street corner libraries, specialized in Chinese comic books and helped refugee children create "a make-believe land." The introduction to the group of photos announces that "[t]here is a fairyland on every street for the million Chinese children who live in the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong," and even the poorest children could walk into the fairyland by spending a few cents.[38] In these photos, all the children look impoverished—all wear shorts and some are shirtless with bare feet— and no homes or parents are mentioned in the captions or seen in the photos. However, both boys and girls are absorbed in their reading at the corner libraries. Besides corner libraries, a mobile library also served to satisfy children's reading desires, as another group of photos taken in 1965 shows. A scholarly figure, Lui Pui-ming, called "Father Christmas" by the children he served, took charge of the library, which is why the group of photos is entitled "A 'Chinese Christmas' Every Week."[39] The two groups of photos, as well as the whole series, were designed to demonstrate how refugee children in the colony led a

[38] "A Fairyland on Every Street for Hong Kong Children," HKRS File No.365-1-137, Hong Kong Public Records Building.
[39] "A 'Chinese Christmas' Every Week," HKRS File No. 365-1-144, Hong Kong Public Records Building.

happy, Christmas-like life in "a fairy land," and how the Colonial government attended to the children's physical and spiritual well-being. To conclude, the Chinese refugee problem, on the one hand, presented the British (Colonial) government with a dilemma and intensified the already entangled relations among the global and local powers. On the other hand, it offered the government a venue in which to exhibit its moral integrity and ability to turn the colony into "a fairy land" for refugee children, countering the U.S. narrative that only the new hegemony could take good care of Hong Kong orphans, as the following part demonstrates.

Adoption from Hong Kong and U.S. News Representations

With the influx of Chinese refugees to Hong Kong and subsequently, increasing numbers of children being abandoned and sent to orphanages, transnational adoption of Chinese orphans became a striking phenomenon in Hong Kong. It also provided a precious opportunity for the United States to continue to extend its influence in Asia, especially after the door to China was closed with the establishment of the Communist government. An analysis of U.S. mainstream newspaper reports of adoption from Hong Kong reveals how the United States displayed democratic and humanitarian values as criticism of Communist China and superiority over the old British empire.

The U.S. "adoption" of Chinese orphans started during WWII and was first conducted through fund-raising activities within the country. According to Christina Klein, in 1938, J. Calvitt Clarke's China Children's Fund (CCF) appealed to American donations to sponsor Chinese orphans by using the rhetoric of "adopting" the sponsored children, and in the late 1950s, CCF and its token "adoption" project gained "public prominence as a success story in the fight against Asian communism."[40] More importantly, the token "adoption" through fund raising, as Klein argues, conformed to racially exclusive immigration laws because "Asians did not have to enter the United States in order to become tied to Americans through family bonds;

[40] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 152-3.

instead, the American family, and the love and aid that went with it, could extend out beyond the borders of the nation."[41] In other words, "adoption" without adding the racially different Chinese children into America protected the racial purity of the ideal American family and simultaneously expanded American hegemonic influence in Asia by extending the domestic sphere into the foreign land of China.

However, after the Cold War began, the token "adoption" seemed to be far from enough, and adoption of Chinese orphans in its literal sense started to appear. In January 1947, the *Washington Post* reported a fourteen-year-old Chinese "waif" being adopted by a U.S. Captain H.A. Finney in China and brought to America. Before his adoption, according to the article, the boy "struck on his own across China," working in factories, or hiding, eating, and sleeping when and where he could. His arrival in the United States on January 11, 1947, the article claims, finally enabled him to "dro[p] a firm anchor" after years of displacement. In this report, the boy is compared to an unattended little boat, drifting in the storms of strife in China until he was provided with "a firm anchor" in a peaceful harbor—the United States, a country far from wars and strife. "Just call him 'lucky' Lo Yin Ling…," the article instructs its readers. It also assures them that the boy himself liked to be called "lucky," although he did not know the meaning of the word.[42] In the narratives of "rescue" and "luckiness," the United States is thus portrayed as a land of peace, security, and prosperity in contrast to Communist China where children were homeless and unattended.

As the door to adoption from mainland China was closed in 1949, the increasing number of Chinese refugees and subsequently, of abandoned children in Hong Kong opened another door through which Americans could adopt Chinese children, and through which the United States could continue to display its humanitarianism in contrast to the inhumanity of Communist China. A1955 *New York Times* article reports that a five-year-old girl, the first Chinese orphan to arrive on the East Coast under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, had ended her "flight from China Reds"

[41] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 153.
[42] "Chinese Waif, 14, Adopted by U.S. Captain," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1947.

with the aid of the Catholic Committee for Refugees of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. She was adopted by her aunt, who took care of her in China before she herself fled to the United States three years ago. The article reported that the girl was orphaned after her mother's death and father's 'liquidation' by the Communists and was then "smuggled out of Communist China" to Hong Kong. Her aunt and adoptive mother, Mrs. Lee, refused to give details of the "smuggling," because doing so might "endanger any relative still living there."[43] Here China is depicted as a country that killed people, dismantled families, and orphaned children, who could only find their way out by fleeing from "China Reds" to the United States as a safe land.

Following this nameless girl, a large number of Chinese orphans entered into the United States through adoption, and the largest groups occurred from 1958 to the early 1960s, primarily through the International Social Service (ISS), the World Adoption International Fund (WAIF) and the Catholic Relief Work, among which, the ISS-Hong Kong was the most important organization. Under the arrangement of ISS, about 1,000 Chinese orphans were adopted into the United States from its establishment in 1958 until 1962.[44] According to Choy, around the same time, American interest in children from Hong Kong "increased significantly, even exceeding interest in adoptions from Japan and Korea." For instance, by January 1, 1959, ISS processed 139 children to be adopted from Hong Kong by American families, while only 26 were adopted from Japan and 49 from Korea.[45] This does not mean that in this period adoption of Japanese and Korean children outnumbered those from Hong Kong, since other organizations, such as Pearl S. Buck's Welcome House, primarily dealt with adoption of Japanese and Korean orphans. However, Choy's findings based on the ISS archive do prove that adoption of Hong Kong orphans was a very prominent phenomenon in this period. Starting from 1963, however, U.S.

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[43] "Girl, 5, Ends Flight from Chinese Reds," *New York Times,* March 15, 1955.
[44] "Xianggang Guer Fu Meiguo Liunian Lai Yue Yiqianming: Jinnian You Jiangyou Wuge Guer Qicheng" 香港孤兒赴美国六年來約一千名: 今年又將有五個孤兒啟程[About 1,000 Hong Kong Orphans Have Been Adopted into the United States in the Past Six Years: Another Five will Depart This Noon], *Kung Sheung Evening News*. October 16, 1964.
[45] Choy, *Global Families,* 51.

adoption from Hong Kong began to drop due to Hong Kong's improved economic and social stability, reduced rate of child abandonment, and increasing number of domestic adoptions. Adoption of Chinese orphans by American families did continue until the late 1970s, but its level never reached those of the early 1960s.[46]

Adoption became a powerful instrument for U.S. Cold War cultural producers to provide a counter-narrative against the criticism from the Communist nations that the United States was racially exclusive to nonwhites, and to construct the United States as a loving, caring, secure, racially inclusive home provider. U.S. newspapers highlighted middle-class white families as representatives of a humanitarian America embracing Chinese orphans and offering them a loving, affluent, permanent home, although the majority of American adoptive parents were of Chinese descent, as both U.S. and Hong Kong newspapers, as well as Choy's research, verify. Many articles headlined reports of adoption from Hong Kong with phrases such as "a new home," "a new life," "orphans find home," "welcome home," "home for refugees," or "welcome to the U.S.A." By using the very language of a birthing story—the promise of rebirth into a new identity, these narratives gave readers a sense that through adoption into the United States, these Chinese orphans were given a new, promising life in hospitable, affluent American homes.

A local newspaper, *Freeport Journal Standard* in Illinois provides an excellent example. Above an eye-catching headline, "Now it's The Wessings Six: Chinese Daughters Join in Circle," is a large family photograph of a happy, mixed-race family made up of a white middle-class couple and four children—two biological children and two newly-arrived Chinese adoptees. The author, Olga Gize Carlile, asserts at the beginning of the article that "hug and loving care make little girls from different continents all alike and one big happy family." The two Chinese girls were reported to be unused to beds and could not sleep when they first arrived. Here beds are used as a signifier of comfort and security, and their being "unused to beds" suggests their long suffering before adoption from Hong Kong. One girl was reported to have not

[46] Choy, *Global Families,* 57.

smiled for two weeks. But soon, the article tells readers, the adoptive family's love made the girl start "laughing loud" and produced a "devoted," "happy" family.[47]

The large family photograph highlights the middle-class white housewife as a caring maternal figure. In the photo, the white couple dress formally. The husband is holding the biological infant, but the wife is standing behind her newly adopted Chinese daughter, one hand stretching to help her hold a toy. While the other members all look at the camera, she fixes her eyes attentively on the girl, suggesting her role as a patient, loving, and caring adoptive mother.[48] The article also narrates their middle-class background: the husband is formerly a reporter for the *Freeport Journal-Standard* and is now city editor of the *Appleton Post-Crescent*, and the wife is not reported to have any career, indicating her role as a full-time housewife. Therefore, besides emphasizing the white middle-class couple embracing the Chinese orphans and providing them with a loving home, this article also displays clear-cut gender roles between the breadwinner husband and nurturing wife.

While most newspaper articles I have collected about white Americans adopting Chinese orphans feature a couple adopting Chinese orphans, the Lo Yin Ling report discussed above is an exception. However, even an exception to the convention of white families functions to reinforce this convention. Above the article is a large family photo with Lo and a white couple, all grinning. However, the caption tells that the white couple was not Lo's adoptive parents but another couple, the Master Sergeant William Vanderwege and his bride, who took the boy to the United States to unite with his adoptive father, Captain Finney. The article is also the only one that does not mention the adoptive father's wife or his marital status, suggesting that he might be a single man. During the early Cold War when the dominant discourse of white families was so powerful, the report of Lo's adoption by a possibly single man was itself striking. Lo's adoption into America in 1947, when adopting Chinese, or Asian orphans in general, was rare, might

[47] "Now It's the Wessings Six: Chinese Daughters Join in Circle," *Freeport Journal Standard*, Illinois, August 6, 1964.
[48] Ibid.

explain why this case was reported.[49] But what is more striking is the replacement of Captain Finny in the happy family photo with the Vanderweges, suggesting that Captain Finny's status as a possible single adoptive father disqualified him to represent the United States as a loving, caring home for Chinese orphans. Captain Finny's replacement also indicates that a man embracing a Chinese orphan does not fit into the Cold War cultural politics that reinforced the rigid gender roles of men as breadwinners and women as full-time housewives and nurturing mothers. Therefore, the discrepancy of the picture with the text demonstrates that the narrative of happy, affluent middle-class white families was an essential part of U.S. Cold War politics, and that adoption of Chinese orphans was incorporated into the narrative.

The portrayal of the white adoptive mother displaying maternal love to the newly arrived Chinese orphan in the *Freeport Journal Standard* article and the replacement of Captain Finney with a white couple in Lo's family photo are no accidents; rather, they show that middle-class housewives were indispensable to U.S. newspaper representations of adoption from Hong Kong during this period. On June 29, 1962, nine-year-old Chinese orphan named Susan Elizabeth was reported to be welcomed by her new, affectionate, white, middle-class family (figure 3.2). The formally dressed adoptive father, Martin H. Dean, and the biological daughter, Diana, stand behind the adoptive mother who, wearing fine clothes, eagerly steps forward and warmly stretches her arms to the newly arrived orphan. However, she is introduced only as Martin H. Dean's wife, implying that her personal identity is not important.[50] What really matters is that she represents housewives of white, middle-class families and loving, caring adoptive mothers.

[49] Both Christine Klein and Choy show that international adoption of Asian children by Americans did not start until the early 1950s. See Choy, *Global Families*, 29; Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 143.
[50] "Orphans Greeted by New Family," *Racine Journal Times* (in Wisconsin), June 29, 1962.

ORPHAN GREETED BY NEW FAMILY—Susan Elizabeth, a 9-year-old Chinese orphan who just arrived from Hong Kong, had a smile for the family that adopted her after she stepped from a plane at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. Greeting the youngster were Martin H. Dean, 52, his wife and their daughter, Diane, 14. Susan Elizabeth was one of 10 Chinese orphans flowns in by jet through the auspices of the International Social Service. Dean, an accountant, resides in Clarendon Hills, a Chicago suburb. —AP Wirephoto

Figure 3.2 Mrs. Dean leads her family to greet the newly arrived Chinese orphan. *Racine Journal Times* in Wisconsin, June 29, 1962.

The indispensability of white middle-class housewives as loving adoptive mothers is fully displayed in an Associated Press photo published on the same day, in which a white adoptive mother is portrayed as meeting a Chinese toddler at the airport alone and kissing and embracing it affectionately (figure 3.3). While the expressionless child faces the camera, the woman is portrayed as facing the child, indicating that all her attention is on the child. Below the picture is the headline "Chinese Orphan Finds a Mother."[51] The newspaper identifies her as Mrs. Robert Moon without mentioning her career, which, together with the pair of glasses she wears, signifies her status as a well-educated housewife from a middle-class family. Whether her husband went with her is not known, but she is shown alone holding the orphan, indicating her sole importance as a loving adoptive mother. The article states that she went to the airport that night to meet the orphan, whom she apparently met for the first time, but her long, affectionate kiss demonstrates her spontaneous love for the child. Here we read a story of romance and intimacy—or of the adoptive mother's romanticized, naturalized love for the child—that personalized U.S. Cold War politics in which children orphaned by Communist China were embraced and loved by middle-class white American housewives.

[51] "Chinese Orphan Finds a Mother," *Waterloo Daily Courier* (in Iowa), June 28, 1962.

CHINESE ORPHAN FINDS A MOTHER— Siu Ching, one of 10 Chinese orphans brought to the U.S. from Hong Kong, is embraced by Mrs. Robert Moon, Mentor, Ohio, who has arranged to adopt her. Greeting was recorded at Chicago's O'Hare airport. Siu Ching is one year old.—(AP Wirephoto.)

Figure3.3 Mrs. Robert kisses the Chinese adoptee affectionately. *Waterloo Daily Courier* (in Iowa), June 28, 1962

The picture, along with the other three discussed above, demonstrates how middle-class white housewives exemplified what Kaplan calls "the Empire of the mother" or "the Empire of affections and the heart" by embracing the foreign child into the "women's sphere."[52] The images of white adoptive mothers embracing and kissing the newly met foreign children construct these women as perfect representatives of the "Empire of affections and love." Adoption of Chinese orphans thus provided U.S. white middle-class housewives a stage on which to extend their domestic influence to Hong Kong and incorporated these women into U.S. expansion in Asia by exhibiting the United States as the humanitarian caregiver of Chinese orphans fleeing from Communist China. By using the term "housewives," I point to a fact that these women's status as full-time wives and mothers was exactly what the newspapers wanted to convey to readers. Paradoxically, while adoption of Chinese orphans allowed these white women to spread their maternal influence to Asia, it further confined them within the "women's sphere" by ignoring their personal identities.[53]

[52] Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire*, 43-45.

[53] My research echoes Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*, in which Friedan observes that middle-class white housewives were troubled by "the problem that has no name" in the 1950s and 1960s. See Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 57-78.

U.S. media representations of adoption from Hong Kong also implicated white children from middle-class families in Cold War politics by portraying them as friendly, well-behaved siblings welcoming the Chinese orphans. In most of the images featuring middle-class white families greeting Chinese orphans, well-dressed, well mannered, smiling white children are included. Although in most images the white mother is portrayed as the central figure, one picture published on the *Oakland Tribune* foregrounds four white boys and completely removes their mother from the photo. This is the only photo I found that removes the white mother from the image, but she is not at all absent. The article makes her the major interviewee giving information about how her family reacted and interacted with the two girls, although once again, she is the only one in the family whose first name is not revealed. The mother praises that the boys were "wonderful. They were such gentlemen." According to the article, as the girls' trip to the United States was postponed three times prior to their arrival, the boys "[were] just as anxious as their parents for their new sisters to arrive." One boy cuts in by saying that "we like 'em a lot."[54] In this article, the visual and verbal texts work together to construct the boys as well-behaved, loving, friendly adoptive siblings welcoming their sisters from Hong Kong. As Laura A. Belmonte argues, U.S. Cold War propagandists carefully made their family selections to meet the requirements of a typical middle-class family, which should be "respectable and suitable as subjects for the picture story."[55] White couples and their biological children were thus co-opted into Cold War cultural politics to showcase U.S. hospitality, friendliness, humanitarianism.

The Marginalized Chinese American Adoptive Parents and Adoption as an Alternative Path to Immigration

Although U.S. mainstream newspapers foregrounded white families, the majority of U.S. adoptive parents were in fact Chinese Americans. This discrepancy demonstrates how powerful

[54] "2 Young Hong Kong Girls Home with Oakland Family," *Oakland Tribune* (*i*n California), August 21, 1966.
[55] Laura A. Belmonte, S*elling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)*,* 151.

the dominant narrative of white middle-class families was during this period and how Chinese Americans as racial minorities were marginalized in U.S. media representations. However, some Chinese American adoptive parents and birth families in Hong Kong turned adoption into an alternative path to immigration for a large number of Chinese children when conventional channels were still not possible for most Chinese. Moreover, Hong Kong adoption shared many similarities with the paper children immigration/adoption during the Exclusion Era, indicating U.S. adoption in early Cold War era was another part of fictive kinship making.

No statistics show the ratio of white to Chinese American adoptive families, but Choy's research as well as both U.S. and Hong Kong newspaper reports indicate that the majority of Chinese orphans were adopted into Chinese American families. Choy has found that ISS initially targeted Chinese American communities for the recruitment of potential adoptive parents, though families of any ethnic group were considered.[56] A Hong Kong newspaper, *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (which means Overseas Chinese Daily), also reported on August 4, 1958 that ISS "introduced (the orphans) to be adopted by overseas Chinese."[57] Four years later, the same newspaper followed up that the majority of overseas adopters were Chinese.[58] The report of the largest group entering into the United States on June 27, 1962 gives us a clearer sense of the percentage of Chinese American adoptive families. According to the reports of the *New York Times* and a local newspaper *Corpus Christi Times* in Texas one week before, all but six of the forty-eight children "would be going to Chinese-American families."[59]

Even so, images of Chinese American families, though not completely erased, were hardly seen in U.S. mainstream newspaper coverage. Among the images of adoptive families that I have

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[56] Belmonte, S*elling the American Way*, 51.
[57] "Bengang Guer Huode Jiating Wennuan: Guoji Shehui Fuwushe Jieshao Yu Haiwai Huaqiao Shouyang"本港孤兒獲得家庭溫暖：國際社會服務社介紹與海外華僑收養[Hong Kong Orphans Gain Family Love: ISS Arranged Them to be Adopted By Overseas Chinese], *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, August 4, 1958.
[58] "Haiwai Lingyang Ertong Dabufen Xi Huayi, Quji Wang Haiwai zhe Nianming"海外領養兒童大部分系華裔，去季往海外者廿名[The Majority of Overseas Adopters are Chinese. Twenty Orphans Were Adopted Abroad in the Last Season], *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, May 3, 1962.
[59] "40 to 50 Hong Kong Orphans Will Come to U.S.," *New York Times*, June 21, 1962; "50 Chinese Orphans Due in U.S.," *Corpus Christi Times*, June 21, 1962.

collected, only two feature Chinese American families welcoming orphans, and they have been carefully chosen to fit into the Cold War politics. In both pictures, the father is formally dressed, indicating his middle-class status and exemplifying the Asian Americans' image of "model minorities," although Choy's research reveals that Chinese American adoptive parents ranged from restaurant workers and grocery store owners to physicians, engineers, and university professors.[60]

Despite their marginalization in U.S. media representations, some Chinese American adoptive families, together with birth families in Hong Kong, turned adoption into an alternative means of immigration for the children. According to Choy, the majority of Hong Kong adoptees were not orphans but children "known" to their Chinese American adoptive families, who either knew the children through "a friend or other intermediary in Hong Kong" or were related to the children.[61] ISS social workers thus believed that U.S. adoption "was being deliberately used as a strategic form of migration to obtain socioeconomic mobility, especially through perceived greater access to educational opportunities." One social worker, Eugenie Hochfeld, also commented in 1959 that birth families in Hong Kong were often willing to relinquish their children for adoption because there was a "cultural belief" in Hong Kong that "a child cannot help but benefit by immigration to the United States," and "this can only be accomplished by means of an adoption plan."[62]

The story of the Bing family in the United States adopting their Hong Kong goddaughter Belinda's four children is an excellent case in point. Sometime from 1958 to 1962, the Bings adopted Belinda's two oldest boys after her husband passed away. Later Belinda asked whether her godparents could adopt her remaining two children as well. In the case of the eldest son's adoption, the document, written by social worker Wynne Chan, quoted the boy's words that besides the youngest daughter, he was "the one whom their mother loved the best," yet he

[60] See Choy, *Global Families,* 58, 61. The highly selective image of Chinese adoptive parents as the representative of "model minority" can be seen, for instance, on the picture published on *Elyria Chronicle Telegram*, December 24, 1965.
[61] Choy, *Global Families,* 49.
[62] Ibid., 58-59.

realized that even though he deeply loved his mother, "he must take the opportunity to go to the States." The document concludes that considering the family's miserable condition in Hong Kong, there was "no doubt" that his adoptive parents could provide "much more in the way of a better education and other material matters than the child's present situation."[63] As this case shows, Belinda's children were adopted by the Bings because of her relationship with them as their goddaughter. Through her son's voice, we hear of her intention to have her children adopted, as the Bings in America could provide them a far better life and educational opportunities. Choosing her eldest (and purportedly) favorite son to be adopted first also suggests how Belinda may have viewed his adoption as a precious opportunity for immigration.

In another case, the voice of the birth mother is heard through the correspondence between her and her son, Christopher, who was adopted by the Leungs in New York in 1958. After her husband was arrested by the Communists in mainland China, the birth mother escaped to Hong Kong with her son and two daughters. After being adopted to the United States, eleven-year-old Christopher felt "a deep hurt over not having heard from his mother" in Hong Kong, though he was happy with his adoptive parents. Considering it better for the boy to know about his birth mother and siblings' situations, ISS-Hong Kong social workers contacted the birth mother, who admitted that she had received several letters from Christopher but had "purposely not responded" because she wanted him to forget his family in Hong Kong. As requested by the social workers, the birth mother finally wrote a letter to Christopher, saying:

> I have lately heard from the International Social Service that you are getting on well, physically well as in other respects, in the home of your new parents. I am glad to know that you are very fortunate in being thus brought up. You must always remain faithful and obedient to your new parents…. secondly, be diligent in your studies, and never talk of low school grades and thus become inattentive in your school work. You have to start from low grades and advance gradually before you

[63] Choy, *Global Families,* 59.

are able to enter college and become a useful citizen in society. This will make your new parents and myself happy.[64]

It is striking that Christopher's birth mother deliberately cut off connection with him to make him forget her and remain loyal to his adoptive parents, indicating that in her eyes, his American adoptive family could give him a better life than she could. Her perceiving Christopher's adoption as "very fortunate" and emphasizing his studies also reveal that she saw adoption as a precious opportunity for him to immigrate to the United States so that he could receive a good education and a bright future.

The two stories and other similar cases during this period reveal many similarities between U.S. adoption from Hong Kong and paper children immigration/adoption from China before 1965. To be sure, there are major differences between them. For instance, paper children immigration/adoption only created de facto adoptive relationship between paper children and their paper families, but Cold War adoption from Hong Kong enabled children to enter the United States through the legal adoption system. However, the similarities between the two far outweigh the differences. First, like paper children immigration/adoption, the majority of Hong Kong adoptees were not orphans but had at least one living birth parent, usually known to the adoptive parents. For instance, the *South China Morning Post* reported on July 2, 1962 that among over 2,500 children in orphanages, the majority had one or both parents living.[65] Also, numerous newspaper articles reported children being adopted by their uncles and aunts.[66] A study conducted in 1959 by Florence Boester, Far East Representative of ISS and founder of ISS-Hong Kong, also reveals that the number of people applying for adopting "known" children was almost twice the number applying for placement through the matching system.[67]

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[64] Choy, *Global Families,* 63-64.
[65] "Overseas Adoption of Hong Kong Orphans," *South China Morning Post*, July 2, 1962.
[66] Just in one newspaper, the *South China Morning Post*, which is the official and the largest in Hong Kong, there are numerous reports of children being adopted by their uncles, aunts, or other relatives or friends of their birth families. See "Three Orphans Leave: Boy Adopted by Childless Chinese Couple in United States," the *South China Morning Post*, June 10, 1958; "Adoption of Orphans," *South China Morning Post*, February 16, 1959; "Four Orphans Leave for U.S.," *South China Morning Post*, August 21, 1959.
[67] Based on Choy's citing of Florence Boester's study "International Social Service: A Brief Study of the Inter-Country Adoption Program in the Far East," see Choy, *Global Families*, 58.

Moreover, like paper children who had to enter with fake documents to create imaginative kinship relations with Chinese American citizens, the early Cold War adoption was another fictive way of adoptive kinship making. In my research I found that the practice of adopting children with living birth parent(s) went against the Hong Kong adoption ordinance. With an increasing number of applications for adoption, the Colonial government issued *A Guide to the Procedure for Legal Adoption in Hong Kong under the Adoption Ordinance of 1956* to regulate adoption of Hong Kong children. According to the guide, the procedure was designed first of all to "assure the Court that the particular child has no natural parents or others who might have claims to guardianship and have not consented to the adoption."[68] Hong Kong newspapers also reported that some children in orphanages were not "legally free for adoption" because they had one or both parents living.[69] On June 1, 1959, the *Kung Sheung Evening News* reported that a Chinese girl, who was originally adopted by an American soldier and his German wife in Hong Kong, had to be returned to her birth parents because she was not an orphan.[70] Both the guide and the reports claim that only orphans who had no birth parents or other guardians were eligible for adoption, but the majority of "known" children adopted by their relatives and family friends did not seem to be orphans. Like restrictions in China in the 1990s, Hong Kong laws in the 1950s and 1960s forbade parents to abandon their children. For instance, in 1962, a mother was reported imprisoned for four months for abandoning her child.[71] These findings contradict the fact that the majority of children adopted into Chinese American families were actually not orphans per se. It is hard to know how ISS made these children "legally free" for adoption, but the evidence points to a possibility that many children had to be imagined as orphans so that they could be legally adopted into the United States.

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[68] *A Guide to the Procedure for Legal Adoption in Hong Kong under the Adoption Ordinance of 1956*, 1. Collection from the Hong Kong Public Records Building, accessed March 20, 2016.
[69] Frank Bennet, "Greater Overseas Interest: Babies Abandoned at Rate of One Every Two Days," *South China Morning Post,* March 23, 1962.
[70] "Mei Shibing yu Shouyang zhi Zhongguo Nǚhai Heying"美國士兵與收養之中國女孩合影[American GI Takes Photo with the Chinese Girl He Adopted], *Kung Sheung Evening News*, June 1, 1959.
[71] "Overseas Adoption Drop," *South China Morning Post*, February 10, 1962.

Like paper children immigration/adoption, the majority of those adopted by Chinese Americans were (older) boys in the birth families, as seen from the two adoption stories discussed above and others in Hong Kong newspapers. Belinda finally had all her children adopted by her godparents, but her elder sons were the first to be chosen for adoption. Likewise, Christopher was not the only child in his birth family; he had two younger sisters but was the only one to be adopted to the United States. In both cases, a better life and good education were the most important reasons why (older) boys were often chosen by their birth families to be adopted. Like the birth parents of most paper sons who considered immigration to the United States a precious opportunity that should first fall upon their sons, birth mothers in both stories saw adoption as the best opportunity through which their sons could immigrate to the United States. No statistics show the sex ratio of those adopted by Chinese Americans, but two *Wah Kiu Yat Po* articles reported that the majority of Chinese American prospective adoptive parents preferred boys of two or three years old.[72] A number of articles reporting individual adoption cases also reveal that usually (older) boys were adopted into Chinese American families, some by families related to their birth families. For instance, one *South China Morning Post* article reported that a group of four boys with ages ranging from eight to twelve were adopted into the United States by "friends and relatives of their families."[73] These findings indicate that Cold War adoption from Hong Kong was a gendered issue and like paper children immigration/adoption, boys were more likely to be chosen.

Furthermore, like paper children immigration/adoption, many Hong Kong adoptees (and often their adoptive parents) maintained connection with the birth families. When Mr. and Mrs. Fong from California attempted to adopt Mei-Ling, a three-year-old girl, Mei-Ling's birth mother insisted that the prospective adoptive parents "write and inform her" of her daughter's life four times a year, and according to the report of the ISS-USA social worker Margret U., Mr.

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[72] "Bengang Guer Huode Jiating Wennuan: Guoji Shehui Fuwushe Jieshao Yu Haiwai Huaqiao Shouyang"; Also see "Guer Shouyang: Haiwai Huaqiao LaiGang Renling Rijian Zengjia"孤兒收養：海外華僑來港認領日見增加[Orphan Adoption: Overseas Chinese Adopting Hong Kong Orphans Increase], *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, March 17, 1959.
[73] "Four Orphans Leave for U.S.," *South China Morning Post*, August 21, 1959.

and Mrs. Fong "regarded the [birth] mother's request as a token of omnipotent maternal love and [agreed] to observe it" once they adopted Mei-Ling.[74] In a follow-up interview on some adopted boys, conducted in 1959 by an ISS social worker Patricia Seavers, the boys were reported to be eagerly showing pictures of their birth families in Hong Kong, and they "correspond[ed] regularly with their mother and siblings and hop[ed] that one day the family [could] join them," because they felt a "heavy responsibility" to their birth mothers and the remaining siblings.[75] This interview reveals how these boys, like paper sons, bore the hope of their birth families that one day their whole families might immigrate to the United States. U.S. adoption was thus viewed by these birth families as an alternative means of immigration not only to the children, but possibly to other family members as well.

Hong Kong Newspaper Representations of Adoption

In addition to Chinese American adoptive parents and their counterparts in Hong Kong, Hong Kong newspapers further complicated U.S. narratives of adoption of Chinese children during this period. They not only minimized white Americans and highlighted Chinese Americans as adoptive parents but also showcased how orphans were well-treated before stepping out of Hong Kong. More importantly, these newspapers brought to the surface alternative U.S. adoption stories—for instance, the story of prisoners as adoptive parents—that were completely erased from U.S. mainstream newspapers. A close reading of these newspapers also reveals the dilemma the British (Colonial) government faced. On the one hand, U.S. adoption would relieve its social welfare burden. On the other, for the Colonial government, avoiding Sino-US Cold War conflict, maintaining the status quo, and containing U.S. influence in Hong Kong were equally important concerns.

Hong Kong newspapers and the different political positions they took exemplified Hong Kong as a site of contestation in the early Cold War years. While major English newspapers,

[74] Choy, *Global Families,* 60.
[75] Ibid., 60.

such as the *China Mail* (closed in 1974) and the *South China Morning Post*, enjoyed readership among English people and elite Chinese and were politically "pro-(Colonial) government for the status quo and conservative," mainstream Chinese newspapers were politically divided based on their attitudes toward Communist China and Nationalist Taiwan. The "traditional journalist paradigm" of Hong Kong Chinese newspapers was leftist-centrist-rightist.[76] Adding commercial criteria to the paradigm since Hong Kong was Asia's financial and commercial center, Clement Y. K. So proposes four types of newspapers in Hong Kong: leftist-political (the *Wen Wei Po* and the *Ta Kung Po*), circulated among pro-China readers; rightist-political (the *Hong Kong Times* and the *Kung Sheung Daily News*), circulated among pro-Taiwan readers; popular-commercial (the *Tin Tin Daily News* and the *Sing Pao Daily News*); and the elite-commercial (the *Ming Pao Daily News* and the *Wah Kiu Yat Po*).[77] The *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, as a mainstream commercial newspaper, was also a "right-leaning paper."[78]

So's paradigm of Hong Kong newspapers is clearly shown in the reports of Chinese orphans and/or their adoption. During the period from 1950 to 1969, no leftist-political papers paid attention to this issue, except the *Ta Kung Po*, which only reported it four times. The rightist-political ones, the *Kung Sheung Daily News* (26 times) and its evening paper, the *Kung Sheung Evening News* (46 times), as well as the centrist-leaning-toward-right one, the *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (53 times), reported the issue frequently.[79] The three papers were also generally considered as pro-Colonial government. The pro-Colonial government English papers, primarily the *China Mail* (14 times) and the *South China Morning Post* (51 times), also paid much attention to Chinese orphans and their adoption overseas.[80]

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[76] Clement Y. K. So and Joseph Man Chan, "Research on Press and Politics in Hong Kong: An Overview." *In Press and Politics in Hong Kong: Case Studies from 1967-1997* (Vol. 48), ed. Clement Y.K. So and Joseph Man Chan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1999), 13.

[77] So and Chan, "Research on Press and Politics in Hong Kong: An Overview," 12.

[78] Ibid., 13.

[79] These numbers of all other newspaper reports except the *South China Morning Post* are based on what I have collected from the newspapers in Hong Kong University Library drawing on the index of Hong Kong historical newspapers provided by the website of multimedia information system, Hong Kong Public Libraries. See https://mmis.hkpl.gov.hk/old-hk-collection. I got the number of reports by the *South China Morning Post* from the website of the *Proquest Historical Newspapers.* See https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.eduhk.hk/hnpsouthchinamorningpost. Both accessed in March, 2017.

[80] Chen Changfeng 陳昌鳳, *Xianggang Baoyue Zongheng Tan* 香港報業縱橫談[The Press in Hong Kong] (Beijing: Falu

In sharp contrast to the U.S. news stories of desperate Chinese orphans embraced by loving and affectionate white adoptive families, Hong Kong newspapers, especially the Chinese ones, frequently highlighted Chinese Americans as adoptive parents. While a large number of reports only provided basic information about the children adopted and which social workers were accompanying them on their trips to the United States, the rightist (and centrist-leaning-toward-right) Chinese newspapers often highlighted Chinese Americans adopting Hong Kong orphans with big headlines. For instance, in the ten articles that I collected from the *Kung Sheung Daily News* from 1955 to 1964 that reported individual cases of orphans being adopted by Americans, six headlined Chinese Americans as adoptive parents. The *Wah Kiu Yat Po* also headlined Chinese American adoptive parents in eight reports from 1956 to 1964, while one article emphasized in its title that the majority of overseas adoptive parents were Chinese.[81]

Besides foregrounding Chinese Americans as adoptive parents, these newspapers also downplayed white American families in their reports, with the *Kung Sheung Evening News* as an exception. Most articles simply use neutral terms when introducing the adoptive families, if not specifically stating Chinese American ones, that the orphans would be adopted by "Americans," "American families," or would "leave for new homes in the United States."[82] Interestingly, the *Kung Sheung Evening News* published several images of white parents embracing Chinese orphans, including the two sensational pictures of the white mother kissing or eagerly reaching for the Chinese orphan, discussed earlier. The *Kung Sheung Evening News* also published a picture of the U.S. National Mother of 1966 (as named by President Lyndon B. Johnson), Bertha Holt, who adopted eight orphans from South Korea and founded with her husband, Harry Holt, Holt International Children's Service, which facilitated more than 1,000 Korean orphans to be adopted by Americans.[83] The political background of the newspaper—as being pro-Taiwan (and

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Chubanshe, 1997), 46, 48.

[81] "Haiwai Lingyang Ertong Dabufen Xi Huaqiao, Quji Wang Haiwai Zhe Nianming."

[82] These neutral terms in "Three Orphans Going to U.S.," *South China Morning Post*, June 7, 1958; the latter is seen in "Orphans Leave for U.S.," *South China Morning Post*, December 18, 1963.

[83] "Yijiuliuliu Nian Meiguo Muqin"一九六六年美國母親[U.S. National Mother in 1966], *Kung Sheung Evening News*, May 6, 1966.

presumably pro-America, considering the close political and military relations between Taiwan and the United States)—explains why it published these images. More importantly, all the images were reported to have been provided by the United Press, the America-based news agency, indicating how U.S. Cold War politics infiltrated Hong Kong. However, apart from the *Kung Sheung Evening News*, in all other newspapers, Chinese and English, images of white American adoptive parents were rarely seen.

Furthermore, unlike U.S. mainstream newspapers that erased all other Western nations as receiving countries, the pro-Colonial government newspapers frequently reported that quite a few Western countries, especially members of the British Commonwealth, were receiving orphans from Hong Kong. For instance, on February 20, 1965, the *Kung Sheung Evening News* reported that up until then, total of 1,036 Chinese orphans were adopted internationally, most of whom went to the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, with the rest to Canada, the Netherlands, and France.[84] The *South China Morning Post* reported on January 23, 1964 that among 61 children adopted overseas in the last quarter of 1963, 31 went to the United States, fifteen went to New Zealand, eleven went to Britain, one to Canada and one to Japan, indicating that only half of this group were adopted into the United States.[85] In other words, while the United States represented itself as the sole permanent home provider of Chinese orphans by erasing other receiving countries, Hong Kong newspapers revealed that nations of the British Commonwealth played an equally important role in welcoming orphans from Hong Kong.

However, such juxtaposition of other receiving countries with the United States does not mean that the Colonial government viewed U.S. adoption as less important; instead, the government reacted actively and worked closely with ISS-USA towards the establishment of the Hong Kong branch that aimed to facilitate U.S. adoption. According to the DSW memo to the

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[84] "Haiwai Renshi Shouyang Bengang Guer Qinian Yu Qianli"海外人士收養本港孤兒七年逾千例[Over One Thousand Hong Kong Orphans Were Adopted Abroad in Seven Years], *Kung Sheung Evening News*, February 10, 1965.
[85] "Adoption of Hong Kong Children," *South China Morning Post*, January 23, 1964.

Colonial Secretary on March 21, 1958, the ISS offered to facilitate adoption of 500 orphans into the United States in two years' time but was requesting support from the Colonial government, including provision of facilities and loan of two experienced local social workers. D. W. B. Baron, the director of DSW, considered the proposal "generous" and saw it an opportunity that Hong Kong could not afford to miss, since the children would be adopted from the governmentally subsidized orphanages, thus relieving the government's financial burdens.[86]

While welcoming U.S. adoption of its orphans, the British (Colonial) government was wary of U.S. expansion in Asia through adoption. On June 11, 1962, a local U.S. newspaper in Mississippi, the *Greenville Delta Democrat Times,* published an article, "British Gov't in Hong Kong Denies Chinese Orphans Exist," reporting that when the Attorney General Robert Kennedy telephoned the British authorities offering to find homes for Chinese orphans in Hong Kong, he was told that there was no need to discuss the matter because no orphans were available for adoption. The author Drew Pearson poignantly comments that "apparently the British don't want to give the world an impression that they have neglected Chinese children," but "anyone can see homeless children on the streets of Hong Kong begging for food." Robert Kennedy then, according to the report, appealed to the British Ambassador to "let the American people help these needy Chinese children." Although most Chinese were still excluded from entering the United States due to the restricted national quota, the author ensures readers that "Chinese Refugee Relief, headed by former Presidents Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman" has offered entry to Chinese orphans.[87]

Britain did not lack a spokesman in America to provide a counter-narrative. Soon a reader named Russell R. Roth sent a letter to the editor of the *Billings Gazette* in Montana, stating that Pearson's Chinese orphan story was misleading. Roth claims that the British "have done and are doing an unsurpassed job of emergency housing construction (as well as numerous other relief

[86] Memorandum from the Department of Social Welfare to the Hong Kong Colonial Secretary on March 21, 1958. HKRS 41-1-9597, Hong Kong Public Records Building.
[87] Drew Pearson, "British Gov't in Hong Kong Denies Chinese Orphans Exist," *Greenville Delta Democrat Times*, June 11, 1962.

programs) for these children and their refugee parents." He labels Pearson's reporting of "homeless children in Hong Kong" a "misstatement" and states that there was "no destitution, no starvation and no homelessness." At the end of the letter, he also says that the British were showing "unexampled humanitarianism."[88]

These two articles exemplify the ideological confrontation and rivalry between the two powers over Chinese orphans, indicating that Chinese orphans became a battleground between the new hegemony which seized every opportunity to extend its influence in Asia and the old empire which tried every means to maintain its control. The U.S. intent revealed in Pearson's letter was clear: since the British neglected the Chinese children, the responsibility of taking care of them and conceivably of other affairs in Asia, should fall upon the United States, whose government and people, including former Presidents Hoover and Truman, were ready to provide permanent homes for Chinese orphans. Nevertheless, Roth insists that Britain was humanitarian, and the Colonial government had both the willingness and the ability to solve the orphan problem, thus U.S. intervention was not welcome.

Besides minimizing U.S. influence, the Colonial government also represented itself, through some pro-governmental English and rightist-political Chinese newspapers, as responsibly taking care of orphans before sending them out for adoption. The papers published numerous images depicting orphans wearing fine clothes and posing with social workers on the airport. Bigger boys are often pictured as wearing dark Western business suits with white shirts and ties while girls were attired in formal dresses. A picture in the *South China Morning Post* on November 7, 1958 captured a group of five orphans leaving Hong Kong for San Francisco, chaperoned by Chinese social worker Mrs. Lucy Locke as arranged by the ISS (figure 3.4). At first glance, the group looks like a well-to-do family made up of two young business men, a young lady, and two little girls, rather than orphans ready to be adopted internationally. The two bigger boys not only wear Western suits with shirts and ties, but also have white handkerchiefs in

[88] Russell F. Roth, "Chinese Orphan Story Misleading," *Billings Gazette,* June 16, 1962.

their upper pockets, coats in their left hands, and suitcases in their right hands, although their short, under-developed figures contradict their mature appearance.[89] Another picture on the *Kung Sheung Daily News* goes further by showing one six-year-old boy standing alone before departure (figure 3.5). Besides the brand new dark suit with white shirt and tie, the boy wears a pair of black gloves and what appears to be brand new black leather shoes. His newly cut hair looks fashionable and his right hands holds a new schoolbag, with what looks like a tag still attached.[90] In stark contrast to the sensational stories on U.S. newspapers that portrayed Chinese orphans as frightened, miserable waifs, the representation of these children ready to depart from Hong Kong signifies the Colonial government's strong sense of responsibility and its economic capacity to provide the orphans with the means to a good life.

Orphans from Hongkong are being sent to their foster parents in the United States in a steady stream by the International Social Service. Yesterday morning five left by Hongkong Airways for Tokyo, where they will change aircraft for San Francisco. They were in the care of Mrs Lucy Locke, seen above with them. The groups that leave generally consist of five children, the older ones being able to help with the babies.

Figure 3.4 "Orphans Leave for U.S.," *South China Morning Post*, November 7, 1958

[89] "Orphans Leave for U.S.," *South China Morning Post*, November 7, 1958.

[90] "Tuoersuo Nei Yi Xiaotong Huo Meiguo Huaqiao Shouyang, Zuo Cheng Fanmei Ji Fumei"托儿所内一小童获美国华侨收养，昨乘泛美机赴美[One Child in a Child-care Center Was Adopted by An American Chinese and Flew to American by Pan Am Flight], *Kung Sheung Daily News*, January 8, 1955.


託兒所內一小童
獲美國華僑收養
昨乘泛美機赴美

【本報專訊】六歲小童麥偉鎏，新會人，昨日乘泛美班機飛赴美國，與其收養父母相會。渠向在女青年會託兒所寄養。渠在美之義父母黃氏，現已向美政府當局爲渠申請得入境手續。該小童昨日由女青年會人員多人，親送渠上機。附圖爲麥偉鎏。（本報記者杜攝）

Figure 3.5 A Chinese orphan flew to the United States for adoption. *Kung Sheung Daily News*, January 8, 1955.

While highlighting other Western countries adopting Hong Kong orphans, which, I argue, had the effect of debunking the narrative of U.S. exceptionalism, Hong Kong newspapers further complicated the U.S. narrative of middle-class white adoptive families embracing Chinese orphans by presenting alternative U.S. adoption stories. On July 6, 1960, both the *Wah Kiu Yat Po* and the *Kung Sheung Evening News* reported that fifteen American life prisoners, some of whom had committed murder, "adopted" a seven-year-old Chinese refugee girl in Hong Kong.[91] Both articles state that the adoption was conducted by donating money and providing for food, clothes, and medicine, and that the girl was not an orphan per se, since she was still living with her mother; however, her father was a forced laborer in the Chinese Communist "concentration camp." The *Kung Sheung Evening News* gave an even more vivid description by comparing the child's miserable condition with those of the fifteen prisoners, stating that the child's adversity was just like that of her prisoner "adoptive fathers" because she was living in a small room, no bigger than the wards her "adoptive fathers" lived in, with her mother and other sisters. By comparing their living conditions, the *Kung Sheung Evening News*, a pro-Taiwan paper, might have originally intended to demonstrate how Communist China caused the misery of the girl, but

[91] "Mei Yuzhong Qiufan Juzi Shouyang Xianggang Nantong"美獄中囚犯聚資收養香港難童[American Prisoners Collected Money to Adopt Hong Kong a Refugee Child], *Wah Kiu Yat Po*, July 6, 1960; "Shiwu Ming Qiufan Shouyang Yiming Nantong, Meiyue Kekuan Buyuan Chuming"十五名囚犯收養一名難童，每月科款不願出名[Fifteen Prisoners Adopted a Refugee Child. They Donate Money Every Month but Don't Want their Names Revealed], *Kung Sheung Evening News,* July 6, 1960.

it had the effect of telling readers that the United States was not as free, democratic, and wealthy as U.S. mainstream newspapers suggested.

These two articles convey important messages. For one thing, unlike the U.S. news media that portrayed the United States as free, affluent, and prosperous through representations of middle-class adoptive families, the *Kung Sheung Evening News* article depicts the fifteen American prisoners in this story as sharing the same deplorable conditions as the refugee girl. For another, it might be argued that the story of fifteen life prisoners "adopting" the refugee girl could be an example of U.S. humanitarianism—that Americans of different social standings were as loving and benevolent as white, middle-class couples. However, the erasure of this adoption from U.S. news media suggests that such types of adoptive parents were the last thing the United States wanted the world to see: the image of the prisoners as adoptive fathers went against Cold War cultural politics aiming to construct the United States as affluent, free, democratic, and superior to both Communist China and the British empire; instead, it suggests a counter-narrative in which the United States could be a place with crime, restriction of freedom, and conditions as pitiful as those of a girl fleeing from Communist China. Moreover, the removal of the fifteen adoptive fathers also demonstrates that they did not fit into the U.S. Cold War politics that took white, middle-class families as the key signifier of American superiority. In sum, Hong Kong newspapers, though holding different political positions, challenged and complicated the U.S. Cold War cultural politics and exposed how the U.S. news media was selective in building the inter/national image during this period.

Conclusion

In her analysis of Hong Kong during the Cold War, Priscilla Roberts comments that "the territory epitomized to the ultimate degree many of the ambiguities and contradictions of the Cold War, a confrontation that, however fierce its rhetoric, was usually characterized by pragmatic action."[92] Cold War adoption from Hong Kong manifests how different polities and

[92] Roberts, "Cold War Hong Kong," 26.

individuals took pragmatic stances. While both America and Britain represented by the Colonial government produced competitive discourses through adoption of Chinese orphans, some birth parents maneuvered the rivalry between the two powers and turned adoption into a legal means of immigration for their children. Cold War adoption from Hong Kong thus displays a historical continuity with paper children immigration/adoption. Adoption is based on choice, but both paper children immigration/adoption and Cold War U.S. adoption demonstrate that the privilege of choosing was not confined to adoptive parents; instead, Chinese birth parents, especially mothers, could choose whether or which child was to be adopted into the United States.[93]

Cold War adoption from Hong Kong predated a bigger wave of adoption from China for nearly thirty years and started a convention in which adoption served as a site of power and media contestations among different polities as well as individuals. The later group far outnumbered Hong Kong adoptees, and the vast majority of post-1990s adoptees are girls adopted by white American families. Yet, as the next chapter shows, adoption from China since the 1990s presents a similar story in which competing nations produced meanings out of adoption as challenged and complicated by adoptive and birth parents, with the only difference being that this time, China spoke for itself as both the sending country of Chinese orphans and an increasingly rising world power.

[93] I cannot have a specific chapter discussing narratives of Hong Kong adoptees, although some of them have appeared in Hong Kong recently to look for their birth parents and form adoptee communities, as reported in a blog *Hong Kong Adoptee Network* and some Hong Kong television programs. These reports contain less adoptee narratives than memorandum of their activities in Hong Kong. The only existing narrative of Hong Kong adoptees is the documentary *Abandoned, Adopted Here* (2015) filmed by Lucy Sheen, a British Chinese adoptee. The film is not included in this project because it is British based and the film is not well received in the United States.

CHAPTER 4

Rescue, Love, and Commodification: Adoption from China Since the 1990s

In June 1995, British Channel 4 television released a documentary, *The Dying Rooms*, which immediately prompted an outcry in the Western world over Chinese orphans in state-run orphanages and women and female children outside the orphanages. The filmmakers Kate Blewett and Brian Woods, posing as workers from an American orphanage, documented with a hidden camera the miserable conditions of orphans in some state-run orphanages. In the United States, Oprah Winfrey introduced the film in her program in 1996 and again 2004. In her 2004 program, she read a letter from an audience member, Patty Smith, who wrote that watching the film in Oprah's 1996 program became "a defining moment" for her. "Those images never left me," she confided. The film made her feel that "we were supposed to adopt one of those children.'" When her healthy, happy Chinese daughter appeared on the big screen, countering the miserable, sick orphans in the "dying rooms," audiences in the whole studio applauded.[1]

This scenario in Oprah's program exemplifies the U.S. narrative of rescuing Chinese orphans suffering in the "dying rooms" of state-run orphanages, or welfare houses, as they are called in China, but this narrative was challenged by the ones created in the Chinese mainstream media and further complicated by some investigative reports concerning corruption in transnational adoption in the early 2000s.[2] In China, the media seldom covered the phenomenon of Westerners adopting Chinese orphans until the 2000s, when it started to draw attention from the Chinese mainstream media. In 2009 and 2016, for example, the China Central Television (CCTV) constructed transnational adoption as a "big love" co-produced by China and Western adoptive parents for Chinese orphans that transcended national, racial, cultural borders. Ironically, in 2005, a year which witnessed the largest number of Chinese orphans being adopted

[1] "The Dying Rooms and Return to the Dying Rooms," *True Vision*, accessed September 14, 2017. http://truevisiontv.com/films/details/57/the-dying-rooms-return-to-the-dying-rooms.

[2] In China, the word "orphanage" is seldom used; rather, the term "welfare house" is utilized, referring to an institution that holds both orphans and seniors. Some houses only host children, and these houses are called children's welfare houses. According to the 1991 and 1999 adoptions laws, only children in the state-run welfare houses are allowed to be adopted.

into the United States, some state-run orphanages in Hengyang, Hunan Province were reported to have been buying and selling babies to supply the international adoption market. The news reports shocked not only Chinese people; after some U.S. newspapers reported the scandal, many American adoptive parents started to worry that their adopted children might not be orphans but babies stolen or robbed from their birth parents. These reports unsettled both the U.S. narrative of rescue and the Chinese narrative of "big love beyond borders."

This chapter looks into Western and Chinese media representations of transnational adoption from China since the 1990s. I focus on three themes. First, I track the charge in the UK-based documentaries *The Dying Rooms (1995)*, *Return to the Dying Rooms (1996)*, and subsequent U.S. newspaper coverage and the New York-based Human Rights Watch/Asia (HRW/Asia) report that the Chinese government and state-run orphanages intentionally neglected Chinese orphans. Second, I analyze the narrative of "big love beyond borders" constructed by the two CCTV programs in 2009 and 2016. Third, I move to the commodification of Chinese orphans as exemplified in the 2005 Hengyang scandal and subsequent news reports on how Chinese birth and adoptive parents desperately searched for lost children who had been adopted by foreigners through the welfare houses.

Putting these different sources together, I demonstrate how adoption functioned as a complicated platform on which mainstream U.S. and Chinese media produced contrastive narratives on China and Chinese orphans and women, and how these narratives were challenged and complicated by the investigative reports of the Hengyang scandal. I argue that in the mid-1990s, anti-communist ideology and the narrative of rescue still drove American media representations, but they were framed by the discourse of human rights of Chinese female children in state-run orphanages and women outside these institutions. Chinese media, on the other hand, constructed narratives of the "beauty of humanity" and of the "big love beyond borders" that erased the role of the United States in transnational adoption and reduced it to the individual agency of loving Western adoptive parents, while simultaneously portraying China as

an open, modern, responsible sending country. However, the investigative reports of the Hengyang scandal exposed the violence of baby snatching from birth or domestic adoptive parents by birth-planning officials and of baby purchase and selling by some welfare houses driven by economic interests generated by the international adoption market. An analysis of these reports also reveals that transnational adoption negatively influenced Chinese domestic adoption in various ways. A juxtaposition of these complex, competing narratives displays how selective U.S. and the Chinese mainstream media were in constructing their respective dominant discourses about adoption from China and what was intentionally omitted from these discourses.

I position my analysis in the Sino-U.S. relations of the post-1990s decades when U.S. concerns over China's human rights issues were entangled with its economic interests in China. The United States began using human rights as a diplomatic tool in the 1970s—for instance, in U.S.-Argentine relations from 1976 to 1980 in the Carter administration—but containment of Communism and security issues were higher priorities in U.S. Cold War foreign policy.[3] With the end of the Cold War, however, human rights became a major issue in U.S. foreign policy. Joseph Darda, for instance, argues that at the end of the Cold War, "human rights as an instrument of war" appeared in U.S. foreign policy, and that humanitarianism and militarism worked together to present the United States "as a righteous force in the world by recasting its wars as a defense against human rights abusers."[4]

Under the discourse of human rights, the world is divided between countries "in need of humanitarian intervention" and those, such as the United States, that appear to "exemplify universal humanity" and are "morally empowered to enact" policies and actions to intervene in the inhuman acts of others.[5] China in the 1990s belonged to the "other world" on the U.S.

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[3] See William Michael Schmidli, "Institutionalizing Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: U.S. Argentina Relations, 1976-1980," *Diplomatic History* 35, issue 2, (April, 2011): 351; Ming Wan. "Human Rights and Sino-U.S. Relations: Policies and Changing Realities," *The Pacific Review* 10, no. 2 (1997): 238.

[4] Joseph Darda, "Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome Narrative: Human Rights, the Nayirah Testimony, and the Gulf War," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 1, (March 2017): 73-4.

[5] Neda Atanasoski, *Humanitarian Violence: The U.S. Deployment of Diversity* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 14.

geopolitical map. Due to the Tiananmen Democracy Movement in 1989, human rights became a key issue in Sino-U.S. relations and China "moved up in the priority list" of the United States and Western European nations as a "human rights offender."[6] U.S.-led Western nations worked closely with non-governmental human rights organizations, for instance, Human Rights Watch (HRW/Asia), to condemn and sanction China for violations of human rights. Charges of corruption and abuse of power, whether in relation to Tibet, imprisonment of political dissidents, forced sterilization or abortion, or the birth-planning policy created a discursive field that served to reduce China into a single narrative of human rights violations. U.S. adoption from China in the 1990s was partly driven by the media's advocacy of human rights of Chinese female orphans and women, though other factors played a more important role. These factors include, for instance, adoptive parents' infertility, their fears of domestic birth parents with "questionable backgrounds and the power to reclaim children," and high requirements (age, health, sexual orientation, marital status) set in the domestic adoption market.[7]

The U.S. government took a far more complicated stance toward China than did the Western media, human rights campaigners, and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs). On the one hand, it played a leading role in charging China with human rights violations, through, for instance, the UN Commission on Human Rights. On the other hand—and contradicting the desire of human rights campaigners to use China's application for the most-favored nation status (MFN) to press China to improve its human rights record—the U.S. government delinked China's trade from human rights issues and approved its MFN status as early as 1994 to protect its own economic interests in China. From the late 1990s to the 2000s, with China emerging as a world economic power and an increasingly important market for U.S. business, U.S. foreign policy shifted to "a strategic policy with China" as human rights concerns continued to give way to U.S. economic interests in China.[8]

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[6] Wan, "Human Rights and Sino-U.S. Relations," 240.
[7] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 53.
[8] Wan, "Human Rights and Sino-U.S. Relations," 248.

China's attitude towards Western condemnation of its human rights issues and Chinese media attention on transnational adoption also underwent tremendous changes from the 1990s to the early 2000s. Facing criticism, China changed its attitude from "denial and silence" in the early 1990s to a "head-on approach" in the mid-1990s, launching media attacks aimed at U.S. human rights issues.[9] In the early 2000s, it shifted to displaying its confidence as a world power, especially with the successful hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games. China's changing attitudes are exemplified in the Chinese mainstream media's silence about transnational adoption in the 1990s and its subsequent wide attention to the phenomenon as part of its active construction of China's positive national image in the 2000s.

The early 2000s also saw the juxtaposition of such active nation-building through adoption in the Chinese mainstream media and some investigative journalists' exposure of adoption-related corruption. The early 2000s, specifically from 2003 to 2013, was the prime time of Chinese investigative journalism, due to a relatively relaxed political environment in the Hu Jintao era. Investigative journalists conducted in-depth investigations to expose social problems and injustice and criticize the negligence of some local governments and officials. Many newspapers, even mouthpieces of the Chinese government, such as the Xinhua News Agency, the *China Youth News*, the *Beijing News*, and some leading economic media, including the *China Business Herald* and the *Economic Observer*, as well as investigative newspapers and magazines, like the *Caixin Century Weekly*, published investigative reports of social injustice, for instance, the 2005 Hengyang baby buying and selling scandal. It was within these social and political contexts that U.S. and Chinese mainstream media constructed the image of China and transnational adoption, constructions that were complicated by other shareholders in the process.

Contextualizing Transnational Adoption from China Since the 1990s

Transnational adoption from China since the 1990s has been embedded in complicated historical, social, and legal context in China. From 1980 to 2016, China's birth-planning policy

[9] Wan, "Human Rights and Sino-U.S. Relations," 241.

underwent multiple modifications, accompanied by the subsequent phenomenon of predominantly female babies being abandoned, a portion of whom were placed in state-run welfare houses.[10] In 1991, the first Chinese Adoption Law was passed, opening the door to transnational adoption, but the modification of the law in 1999 and 2007 deeply influenced transnational adoption during this period. A close look at how the birth-planning policy and Chinese Adoption Law evolved provides a better understanding of transnational adoption from China in this period.

Since the 1990s, China has been one of the major sending countries of transnational adoptees, while the United States has been the largest receiving country. The first case of foreigners adopting Chinese orphans occurred in 1981, but transnational adoption started officially on April 1, 1992, when the 1991 Adoption Law was enforced. By the end of the 1990s, around 30,000 Chinese orphans had been adopted into the United States.[11] While Russia remained the largest sending country until 1999, China has ranked first since 2000 (with the exception of 2008 when Guatemala was the largest). Transnational adoption from China since the 1990s has become such a striking phenomenon in the United States that historian Catherine Ceniza Choy labels it "a social norm," and sociologist Toby Alice Volkman describes it as a wave "unprecedented in magnitude and visibility."[12] The wave decreased gradually after its peak of 7,903 in 2005 and was it its lowest point of 1,687 in 2016.[13] A number of factors explain the decrease, including the economic development of China from a Third World country to a second-world one in the 2000s; the decreasing number of relinquished babies; the continual loosening of the birth-planning policy; and the gradual promotion of domestic adoption after 2005 when

[10] The term "birth-planning policy" is the literal but accurate translation of the Chinese term. While the Western media uses the biased and inaccurate term "one-child policy" (the strict "one-child policy" was applied only for a short period of time and was soon replaced by the "one-son/two-child policy" in many areas), some scholars, such as Sara K. Dorow, use the more neutral term, "family-planning policy." My choice of using "birth-planning policy" was inspired by Kay Johnson, a scholar of China's baby abandonment and adoption. I also use the word "abandon" as a neutral term for the relinquished children in China, following Johnson and Dorow. See Kay Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son* (throughout the book) and Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 60, 170, 187, etc.

[11] Choy, *Global Families,* 1; Volkman, *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, 82.

[12] Volkman, *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, 1.

[13] "Statistics," *Intercountry Adoption* by Bureau of Consulate Affairs, U.S. Department of State, accessed May 16, 2017, https://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/about-us/statistics.html#.

China officially joined in the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption, which privileged domestic adoption over foreign adoption.[14]

The decrease of U.S. adoption from China is accompanied by changes in the sex ratio and age among children adopted into the country. As U.S. media has always represented, the vast majority of the adoptees were girls. According to the statistics provided by the U.S. Department of State, among the 7,903 Chinese orphans adopted into the country in 2005, 94.9 percent were girls. However, the extremely imbalanced sex ratio started to change in 2006, with the numbers of girls gradually decreasing each year. In 2016, male children outnumbered female ones for the first time, 50.3 percent to 49.7 percent. Furthermore, while in most of the earlier years, the vast majority of adoptees were younger, healthy children, later years witnessed older and/or disabled children adopted into the United States. The U.S. Department of State shows that while in 2005, 94.1 percent of adoptees were under two years old, in 2015, 31.8 percent were under two, and in 2016, the number continued to decrease to 21.9 percent. The data does not provide statistics about disabled children.[15] The *Guangzhou Evening News* reports that in 2012, 69.5 percent of children adopted by foreigners were disabled, and after that Canton Province primarily offered disabled children for foreign adoption.[16]

That China has become the major sending country of orphans since the 1990s is closely related to its birth-planning policy starting from 1980, but in contrast to the Western media representation of the policy as a static, unchanging "one-child" policy, the policy has undergone multiple adjustments.[17] On October 26, 1978, the Central Committee of the Communist Party

[14] The view that China is a second-world country is now seen in some scholarly writings; for instance, Kai Kimppa observes that second world countries such as Brazil and China "have been working on rising" to the status of First World countries. See Kimpa, "Socially Responsible International Intellectual Property Rights in Software and Other Digitally Distributable Material," in *The Information Society: Emerging Landscapes*, ed. Chris Zielinski, Penny Duquenoy and Kai Kimppa (New York: Springer, 2006), 38.

[15] "Statistics," accessed May 16, 2017, https://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/about-us/statistics.html.

[16] "Guangdong Qiying Buduan Jianshao, Shewai Songyang Zhujian Jianshao"廣東棄嬰不斷減少，涉外送養送養逐漸減少[The Number of Abandoned Babies Decreases Gradually, So is Transnational Adoption], *Yangcheng Wanbao*羊城晚报[Yangcheng Evening News], June 6, 2013.

[17] Such representations can be seen in, for instance, both a NPR article on February 1, 2016 and a *National Geographic* one on November 13, 2015, See "How China's One-Child Policy Led to Forced Abortions, 30 Million Bachelors," NPR books.

issued its No.69 document, announcing that "a couple was encouraged to have only one child, at most two at intervals of at least three years." In February 1980, the central government issued the strict "one-child policy."[18] Yet the implementation of the policy met resistance in rural areas where a social welfare system was yet to be established and where a son was needed to take responsibility for providing for the parents' senior years and for major labor force in the fields, since daughters would marry into other families and share their husbands' responsibilities. Starting in 1984, the central government adjusted the policy to allow couples in rural areas who already had a daughter of above age five (or, in some areas, eight) to have a second child, which is called by some Western scholars as the "one-son/two-child policy."[19]

The strict "one-child policy" and the later "one-son/two-child policy" were implemented to varying degrees and in different durations in specific regions. Research shows that since 1984, only a minority of rural areas have practiced the "one-child policy." Most rural areas had, instead, followed the "one-son/two-child policy."[20] However, not all regions started the "one-son/two-child policy" at the same time. Hubei Province, for instance, started in 1988. In urban areas, the strict "one-child policy" was enforced without major changes until 2011, when it was loosened to allow couples to have two children if both the husband and the wife were from one-child families. Since 2013, couples in which either the husband or the wife was from a one-child family could have a second child. Starting from January 1, 2016, all families nationwide are allowed to have two children. Thus the so-called "one-child policy" became, officially, a "two-children policy," as the birth-planning policy persists.

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http://www.npr.org/2016/02/01/465124337/how-chinas-one-child-policy-led-to-forced-abortions-30-million-bachelors; and Aileen Clarks, "See How the One-child Policy Changed China," National Geographic, published on November 13, 2015. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/151113-datapoints-china-one-child-policy/ Both were accessed on August 29, 2017.

[18] Xuejun Yu, "Retrospect and Comments on the Thirty-Year Family-Planning Policy in China," *China Population Today* 25, no. 5 (2008):31-35. The term "one-son/two-child policy" is used by scholars such as Kay Johnson, see Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son*, 15. Sara Dorow uses a similar term "one son, two children" policy, see Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 285.

[19] Wang Guangzhou, Hu Yaoling, "History and Development of China's Family-Planning Policy," accessed March 15, 2014, http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2012/1120/c83861-19632821.html

[20] Kay Johnson, Huang Hanbing and Wang Liyao, "Infant Abandonment and Adoption in China," *Population and Development Review* 24, no.3 (Sept., 1998): 469-510.

The birth-planning policy and its stringent implementation have caused serious social problems, the largest being the huge number of abandoned female babies crammed into state-run welfare houses in the 1990s. Interestingly, this phenomenon did not occur in the early 1980s when the strict one-child policy was implemented, or in the-mid-to-late 1980s when the one-son/two-child policy was in effect in rural areas, but rather in the 1990s. It resulted from "an escalation of birth-planning efforts" from the late 1980s to the 1990s. Kay Johnson, an American sociologist who has done groundbreaking research on Chinese orphan abandonment and adoption, observes that in the early 1990s there was "an explicit connection between abandonment and birth-planning campaigns"; namely, when birth-planning work was tight, local welfare houses received more foundlings. Birth-planning officials in some areas, under pressure from the threat that failure to meet birth-control goals might incur ineligibility for promotion and/or bonus and disqualification of their working units from becoming "advanced" ones, took the approach of "opening a small hole to close a large hole."[21] In other words, with the one-son/two-child policy as a small opened hole, the cadres intended to close the larger hole of extra-quota births. The period from the late 1980s to the 1990s thus saw both the loosening of the birth-planning policy and the tightening of enforcement of the policy that led to large numbers of babies being abandoned and a portion of them being placed in welfare houses in the 1990s.

No accurate statistics show how many children were abandoned each year, but according to Johnson, only 20 percent of these children were placed in welfare houses, and the rest were actually unregistered or "black children." The specific number of unregistered children is also unknown, but judging from the one million estimated by the Ministry of Public Security in 1988, the unregistered number in the early 1990s could be even larger than one million. Johnson found, however, that many unregistered children were raised by their parents as "adopted" children or informally adopted by others. The total number of children being domestically adopted is, again, unknown, but from one of Johnson's earlier surveys revealing that perhaps 500,000 children

[21] Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son*, 54, 56, 57, 82.

were domestically adopted in the late 1980s, both formally and informally, we can speculate that more domestic adoptions occurred in the 1990s.[22]

Another social problem caused by the policy and its implementation was the forced abortion, sterilization, and severe economic damage suffered by those who violated the policy. Starting from the 1980s, forced abortion, sterilization, and the phenomenon of birth guerillas (couples who fled to other areas to keep their extra-quota children) occurred frequently, especially in Hunan and Hubei Provinces where the "custom of throwing away [girl] babies" was "particularly pronounced" as compared to other areas in China.[23] Usually the couple, rather than the woman alone, was implicated— not only women but also men might be encouraged or forced to be sterilized. Those who violated the policy would receive economic forfeits of varying degrees, charged in the form of fines. The fines were renamed "extra-quota fees" in 1996, and "social support fees" in 2001 using the logic that those violating the policy should compensate for the governmental social resources their extra-quota children were taking. Punishment for extra-quota births might also include other economic losses. For instance, in Hunan Province, birth-planning officials might even tear down the violators' houses as a punishment and a warning to others.

Aligned with the adjustments to birth-planning policy was the evolution of the Chinese Adoption Law in 1991, 1999, and 2007. On December 29, 1991, the first Adoption Law in the PRC was passed by the National People's Congress which limited adoption applicants to those who were childless, over thirty-five years old, and having no disease inappropriate for adoption (article 6). Those who adopted disabled children did not need to meet the requirements (article 7). Article 21 of the law also allowed foreigners to adopt Chinese orphans.[24] The amendment of the law in 1999 lowered the age limit of prospective parents to thirty years old. It also set stricter

[22] Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son,* 8, 78.
[23] Ibid., 10.
[24] "ZhongHua Renmin Gongheguo Shouyang Fa"中國人民共和國收養法[The Adoption Law of the PRC], *China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption,* accessed May 16, 2017, http://cccwa.mca.gov.cn/article/fgzc/flfg/201103/20110300141424.shtml.

requirements that applications be investigated and approved by their host governmental departments.[25] In late 2006, the China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA), the highest governmental department administrating adoption and the former institution of the current China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA), made a new regulation that starting from May 1, 2007, applications for foreign adoption gave priority to heterosexual couples between thirty and fifty years old with annual incomes of no less than $80,000 U.S. dollars. The amendment also ruled out applicants who were single, homosexual, who suffered from obesity and depression, and whose first marriages lasted less than two years or remarriage(s) less than five years.[26]

The evolution of both the birth-planning policy and the Adoption Law in the two decades, together with China's economic development in the 1990s and its rising global influence in the early 2000s, provided a larger social context in which to understand the flows and ebbs of transnational adoption and to analyze cultural representations concerning it. When the birth-planning policy was stringently enforced in the mid-1990s, baby abandonment became a serious social problem that led to condemnation from the Western media and HRW against China and state-run orphanages. Subsequently, demand from Western countries to adopt Chinese orphans increased tremendously. The loosening of the law in 1999 can be read as the response from the Chinese government to the increasing demand. However, the huge foreign demand also led to a increased opportunities for baby trafficking, as exemplified by the 2005 Hengyang scandal, which directly pointed to the supply-and-demand relations between some state-run orphanages and the international adoption market. The adoption law was then tightened. After the 2007 amendment, adoption from China gradually decreased. China's economic development with an improved social welfare system in rural areas and subsequently lowered birth rate and dramatically decreased number of abandoned babies further reduced the number of Chinese

[25] "ZhongHua Renmin Guoheguo Zhuxi Ling"中國人民共和國主席令[Order of the President of the PRC], accessed May 16, 2017, http://www.lawxp.com/Statute/s1010151.html.
[26] "Shouyang Haizi Bian Nan le"收養中國孩子變難了[Adopting Children is Getting Harder], *Global Times*, December 21, 2006.

children available for transnational adoption. China's role as a new world power in the early 2000s also gave the Chinese mainstream media a language for building positive national image out of transnational adoption. Transnational adoption thus turned into a site in which both Western and Chinese mainstream media produced knowledge about China and Chinese orphans.

Saving Female Babies from *The Dying Rooms*

Even today, the Western media is filled with narratives of Chinese orphans in need of rescue from the "dying rooms," an image of state-run orphanages constructed by the mid-1990s Western media and HRW condemnations. Googling the term "Chinese orphanages" displays a full webpage with words like "the plight of Chinese orphans," "horrific," "tragic tale of China's orphanages," "rescued from a Chinese orphanage," and other similar phrases.[27] An analysis of these Western condemnations provides insight into how the images of Chinese orphanages as "dying rooms" and female orphans as miserable were constructed, and how the residual anti-Communist ideology served the discourse of human rights advocacy in producing meanings about China and Chinese people, primarily institutionalized orphans.

The Dying Rooms, released by British Channel 4 television in 1995, has circulated widely in the Western world. Over 100 million viewers in 37 countries have watched it.[28] The film won numerous awards in the West in 1995, including an Emmy, Peabody Award, Royal Television Society Award for International Current Affairs, Monte Carlo UNESCO Special Jury Award, Monte Carlo Silver Nymph for Documentary, among others.[29] In 2012, Lord Grade, former BBC chairman, deemed the film as the first of "Ten of the Greatest Documentaries" in Britain.[30] Although the film was criticized by Kay Johnson as "sensationalized" and "crudely researched," these awards indicate how highly it was regarded by Western viewers.[31]

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[27] https://www.google.ca/?gfe_rd=cr&ei=rKgwWZCRDNOfXr2wtdgL#q=chinese+orphanage. accessed June 1, 2017.
[28] "The Dying Rooms and Return to the Dying Rooms," *True Vision.*
[29] Other awards include Medianet Gold Award, Winner of the Prix Italia, the Indie Award, the Canadian International TV Festival Award, Broadcasting Press Guild Award for Best Documentary, Communicators of the Year Award, Cable ACE Award, and Nominee for the British Flaherty Award for Documentary. See "The Dying Rooms and Return to the Dying Rooms," *True Vision.*
[30] "The Dying Rooms to Simon's War: Ten of the Greatest Documentaries," accessed on May 17, 2017, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-2091591/The-Dying-Rooms-Simons-War-Ten-greatest-documentaries.html.
[31] Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son,* 71.

The film and the subsequent media coverage generated a huge call among Western audiences to save Chinese orphans. In an interview, Blewett described the immediate reaction the film inspired: "When the film actually hit the screens, it was just phenomenal. [Our] office, from floor to ceiling, was full of sacks and sacks of mail from everyone wanting to help."[32] Coincidently, U.S. adoption from China greatly increased in 1995 and 1996, suggesting that the film might have influenced many Americans' decision to adopt Chinese orphans. In 1994, 787 Chinese orphans were adopted by Americans, but the number reached 2,130 in 1995 and 3,333 in 1996.[33]

The film also generated a wave of sensational media condemnations of the Chinese government in the United States. After the release, HRW/Asia contacted and closely collaborated with Blewett and Woods. Based on their investigation of the Shanghai No. 2 Welfare House, HRW published a 331-page report entitled *Death by Default*: *A Policy of Fatal Neglect in China's State Orphanages* and Blewett and Woods released *Return to The Dying Rooms*, the reworked version of *The Dying Rooms*, both in January 1996. What followed were reports in almost all U.S. national newspapers and a large number of local newspapers, such as the *Daily Herald* in Chicago, Illinois, the *Ukiah Daily Journal* in California, and the *Northwest Florida Daily News*, to name only a few. The *New York Times* alone published eleven articles on Chinese orphanages and orphans in January and February of 1996. The same number of articles appeared in the *Washington Post* from January to March 1996, and in the *Los Angeles Times* from January to April. A slightly smaller number appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor,* and the *Boston Globe*. These newspapers not only reported on this topic with high frequency but often with big sensational headlines, large pictures, and long reports on their front pages. "Holocaust, the China Parallel," reads one headline on January 24 in the *Washington Post*. "Inhuman Neglect in China's Orphanages," says the *Los Angeles Times* on January 10.

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[32] "The Dying Rooms and Return to the Dying Rooms."
[33] "Historical International Adoption Statistics, United States and World," accessed May 22, 2017. http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/adoptionstatsintl.html.

The most influential part of *The Dying Rooms* is the numerous images of orphans in the grim rooms of state-run orphanages, accompanied by mournful music. In what the filmmakers thought of as one of the best orphanages, the close-ups of baby faces appear, some crying, some staring blankly, milk bottles next to their mouths but nobody feeding them, indicating that they have been long neglected. In lengthy close-ups some infants are shot with cameras positioned outside the iron-bar crib handrails, and toddlers are filmed sitting in Chinese bamboo potty chairs, their feet tied to the chair legs. Older children are shot from outside an iron-bar gate of the courtyard, huddling together and looking toward the outside world. The iron-bar gate is commonly used in people's courtyards in small towns and rural areas due to its security and low cost, but to Western viewers who have never been to China, the repeated images of iron bars constructs a sense of the orphans' incarceration. Through the repetition of such images, together with the mournful music, the film infers that orphans are confined in prison-like environments.

Another group of striking images is the dark rooms in the orphanages, from which the title is drawn. In the first sequence of the film, a flight of gloomy stairs and a dim upstairs room are shot with a shaky hand-held camera to produce the sense of audiences being present with the filmmakers. A male voiceover explains how the film got its title: "In the state-run orphanages in China today, [we] found dying rooms. Understaffed orphanages simply abandon those who become ill and put them in the room and leave them to die." The film then shows a "dying building" in another orphanage, in which a big room is captured in wide angle accompanied again by mournful music. In the room viewers see no orphans but rows of empty wooden cribs, a basket of baby shoes on one crib covered with a grass mat, a baby sock on another, and in one corner, a leg of a plastic toy baby lying beside a broken basket and a pile of firewood. The sequence creates a sharp contrast between presence and absence. Cribs, shoes, and socks are associated with babies but no babies are seen. The sock and the toy leg appear not in pairs but discarded casually, single and broken, signifying that the orphans who once lived here were discarded or treated casually by the caregivers. As viewers might be wondering where the

orphans are, the film gives the answer: a white-coated staff is then shot closing the door of the building while the voiceover narrates that "Eighty or so lives ended here last year, unnoticed, unremembered, and unmourned," implying that the building is empty because the babies here all perished.

The iconic image—a dying child named Mei Ming—epitomizes the film's image of orphan neglect in the "dying rooms"(figure 4.1). Before entering the room, the voiceover announces that a baby girl was left inside to die ten days before, and that the staff "preferred not to enter the room, waiting instead for one of the children to report if the infant had died." When the child appears on screen, he/she is lying on a bed, wearing thick clothes and covered with a quilt. Then the filmmaker Kate Blewett, herself wearing a winter coat, starts to unclothe the child so his/her skinny, naked body is exposed little by little under the gaze of viewers. Even naked, the child's genitals remain concealed. As the long-shot of the whole naked body shifts to close-ups of the pale face, viewers see his/her sunken cheeks and layers of blisters circling around the eyelids. Now the child starts to wail in a weak, hoarse voice, sometimes shaking his/her head, stopping for a while and wailing again. Accompanying these images, a Chinese-accented voice from a female Chinese journalist comments in English: "Very sad. It's so inhumane that I cannot believe. If she were a boy, they would try their best to save him, but because she is a girl, she is left to die. She is waiting to die." The voiceover's announcement, the image of the naked orphan, and the Chinese journalist's comment work together to convince viewers that an extremely sick child, whose only crime was being female, is being left to die.

Figure 4.1 The image of Mei Ming, *The Dying Rooms*, 1995.

While these images impress viewers with orphans being neglected in the "dying rooms," several Western human rights campaigners appear in the film to explain the causes of the neglect. The campaigners, including Jonathan Mirsky, editor of East Asia edition of the *Times* newspaper and Steven Mosher, author of *A Mother's Ordeal*, view the birth-planning policy as the direct cause of female babies' neglect inside the orphanages and of women's distress outside. Mosher describes how women were locked up for forced abortions or were sterilized "without their knowledge or permission" when receiving other treatments, and how husbands were arrested until their wives were given abortions. He also cites Chinese President Deng Xiaoping's exhortation: "Use whatever means you have to control China's population. Just do it. With the support of China's Central Committee of Communist Party, you have nothing to fear." As he says this, the film cuts to a clip of Deng appearing on the screen and being applauded by a large number of Communist cadres surrounding him. The cadres wear the same dark blue Chinese tunic suit as Deng and appear like a uniformed army. By emphasizing the words of Deng, who the West depicted as another dictator after Mao and the human rights "butcher" of the Tiananmen Movement, the film stimulates both Cold War anti-Communist and Tiananmen Massacre sentiments among Western viewers, indicating how anti-Communist ideology was entangled with and worked for Western human rights advocacy in this context.[34]

While *The Dying Rooms* impresses viewers with sensational images of neglected orphans, *Return to the Dying Rooms* released in 1996 heavily relies on HRW/Asia's investigation into the Shanghai No. 2 Welfare House and stresses that the Chinese government systematically and deliberately left orphans to die as a policy of population control in the house. Two Chinese witnesses, Zhang Shuyun, a female doctor who had worked in the house for five years, and Ai Ming, an adult orphan growing up in the house, provide the strongest evidence. They describe how the staff abused and deliberately neglected orphans through a "summary solution," the policy of "deliberately starving selected orphans to keep the number of inmates down to a certain

[34] The word "butcher" is borrowed from Ming Wan's article "Human Rights and Sino-U.S. Relations." See Wan, 240.

level," which the human rights campaigners condemned as "systematic and institutionalized murder." The accusations are further supported by the photographs Ai Ming took. Orphans in the pictures are lying on a bed, lifeless and scrawny, and nearly naked, their clothes rolled up to their upper chests (conceivably by Aiming when he took the photos).[35] While the images of the naked, skinny orphans are startling, what is more startling is the film's deliberate exposure of their nakedness, which flies in the face of claims that the filmmakers and HRW are speaking on their behalf.

Return to The Dying Rooms and the human right campaigners continued to produce an anti-Communist ideology. Wu Bangguo, the then municipal party secretary of Shanghai and later the vice premier, is particularly singled out both in close-ups at a Communist national conference in the film and in a talk show program called *The Dying Rooms Debate*. In the debate, Jonathan Mirsky refers to Wu as a member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and one of the most powerful politicians. According to Mirsky, Wu suppressed and covered up the investigation by dictating that the Communist party would "destroy professionally and politically those who have done the investigation" because the house was taken over from the Catholic Church, who gave far better care, so the Communist government had to cover up the scandal to save face. The neglect of orphans in the orphanage is thus represented as being inherently associated with the coercive and callous nature of the Communist government.

In *Return to the Dying Rooms*, Mei Ming's clip was chosen again as the epitome of orphan neglect, but unlike *The Dying Rooms*, which blames the orphanage staff for neglecting the child, in *Return to the Dying Rooms* the child's neglect is blamed on the Communist government and thus becomes a powerful vehicle to convey an anti-Communist ideology. Immediately following the familiar lengthy close-ups of Mei Ming's wailing face and naked body is Blewett's voiceover that the Chinese government claimed *The Dying Rooms* footage as "vicious fabrications." As she says so, the Chinese official statement is presented on the screen, with the red national flag

[35] "Chinese Orphanage Gives Tour, Denies Abuse," *Los Angeles Times,* January 9, 1996.

fluttering slowly as its background. The moving red flag and the still words create a contrast, drawing viewers' attention and reminding them of the "red" nature of the official denial. The sequence soon shifts to the statue of Mao Tse-tung. Mao is shot from below, looking down at viewers while standing with one arm akimbo and holding his coat. From this angle, the camera makes him an enormous and threatening Communist dictator, echoing his Cold War image in Western representations. The juxtaposition of Mei Ming's image, the red flag, Mao's statue, and the official statement conveys multiple meanings to viewers: Mei Ming's pitiful image contradicted the governmental statement; the fluttering red flag and Mao's statue signify that the miserable conditions of orphans are inherently rooted in the Communist nature of the government.

Considering the HRW's strong support of the film, the stimulation of anti-Communist sentiments here reveals not so much the Cold War ideology of containing Communism as the HRW advocacy for the human rights of Chinese orphans through exposing the atrocity of the Chinese government. In other words, the two films reframe the anti-Communist ideology in the discourse of human rights advocacy. By highlighting the U.S. human rights discourse, I do not aim to deny that violations of human rights existed in China or anywhere else; rather, I emphasize the ways in which a selective condemnation of China's violations of human rights served to construct a discursive frame within which China as a whole came to be equated in U.S. media with extreme violations of human rights.

The HRW/Asia's publication immediately spread to U.S. mainstream newspapers. The *Los Angeles Times* echoed it with the article "China's 'Model' Orphanage Serves as Warehouse for Death," illustrated with a cartoon of a black skeleton holding a naked Chinese female infant (figure 4.2). The skeleton's left arm is holding the infant's head, but his right hand squeezes the child's two legs, making them disproportionately thin and small compared to the head. While the infant looks miserable and in pain under compression, the skeleton displays a sinister smile on his skull face, with his mouth open showing big teeth. The skeleton himself is even scarier.

Sitting on a typical Chinese stool, his upper body is much larger than his lower limbs. One side of his body exposes his bones, and the other side shows a zipper from shoulder to waist, implying that he is wearing a black overcoat associated with death. Compared with his black clothing, his head is white and again disproportionally large, making him a monster. Under the cartoon the article states that selected children were neglected in dying rooms where malnutrition and dehydration would claim them while the orphanage staff could do away with responsibility for the deaths. The article then comments that HRW "offers a horrifying look behind China's wall of official propaganda into an important part of its 'Socialist' welfare system" which is actually "gruesome," "grizzly" and "sinister."[36] The combination of the cartoon and the text vividly illustrates institutionalized orphan neglect: if the whole skeleton represents the socialist welfare system, his black body can be a metaphor of the dying room where the orphan is left to die. Moreover, the title of "China's 'Model' Orphanage" uses the word "model" with multiple meanings. First, it refers to the Shanghai No. 2 Welfare House, implying that other houses would follow or situations would be worse, since Shanghai is the richest city in China. Second, the neglect of orphans in this house is the model of the Chinese socialist welfare system, indicating that under the Communist leadership and the socialist welfare system what happened in this house is normal and typical. In this sense, the article not only critiques the phenomenon of orphan neglect, but the Chinese political and welfare systems alongside it.

[36] "China's 'Model' Orphanage Serves as Warehouse for Death," *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1996.

Figure 4.2 The image that represented China's "model orphanage," *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1996.

A *New York Times* article "On My Mind: Death for Chinese Children" goes further by condemning both the "atrocity" of the Chinese government and the appeasement of the U.S. counterpart. It accuses the Chinese regime of the crimes of destroying freedom, murdering orphans, oppressing religion, and enslaving laborers. But the author A. M. Rosenthal seems more irritated by the silence the Clinton Administration kept in order to gain the "theoretical trade profit" from Chinese business. "Do we still have the right to mourn (for Chinese orphans)?" he asks sarcastically. He asserts that the U.S. public and leadership had known for decades that every Chinese Communist regime has used forced abortion and starvation to control its population, slave laborers to maintain its economic system, as well as torture and prison to maintain its political power, but in order to get a little profit for American business, the U.S. Government and Western society have sold their rights to mourn for the orphans. In the Sino-U.S. trade, Rosenthal continues, the profits mostly went to China, which used its increased economic powers for increased political powers, so the U.S. government has "betrayed not only orphans and women forced to abort but the principles and safety of our democratic society."[37] Associating the issue of orphan neglect with the Sino-U.S. business, Rosenthal argues that doing

[37] "On My Mind: Death for Chinese Children," *New York Times,* January 9, 1996.

business with such a "sinister," "atrocious" Communist regime, the Clinton Administration was endangering U.S. safety and democratic principles. As an editor, reporter, and columnist of the *New York Times* since 1943, Rosenthal wrote numerous articles about Cold War issues and visited some former Communist countries, including a Soviet GULAG camp in 1988.[38] Thus it is no surprise that his argument bears a strong Cold War anti-Communist tone. What is striking is his anger towards the U.S. government, which, in his logic, should sanction China in the name of Chinese orphans rather than doing business with it. His argument thus echoes HRW's criticism against the U.S. government for delinking trade with China's human rights issues.

HRW's advocacy for Chinese orphans through U.S. media is also entangled with the narrative of rescuing Chinese orphans. On February 21, Holly Burkhalter, an adoptive mother and Washington director of HRW, published an article in the *Washington Post* urging the United States to act on behalf of Chinese orphans. According to her, President Clinton and the United States should take the lead at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in condemning China's neglect of its orphans; American churches, synagogues, and the like should "organize a letter-writing campaign" on behalf of Chinese victims; and adoption agencies should press for full access to children in state-run orphanages.[39] In her logic, government, organizations, and individuals in America should unite to "save" Chinese orphans by forcing China to loosen its adoption policy and give Western adoptive parents full access to the institutionalized children. Burkhalter is not the only human right officials who demanded China to release more orphans for adoption. Another Human Rights campaigner, Philip Bake, in the talk show *The Dying Rooms Debate*, also "taught" China how to get "praise" rather than "criticism" from the West: by loosening adoption policy to allow Westerners to adopt two children at one time and allow those under thirty-five to adopt. These remarks reinforce the narrative of rescue and obligation constructed by the Western media, suggesting that since China was not able to take care of its orphans, it should open its door wide open and make all orphans available to Westerners.

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[38] "A.M. Rosenthal, Editor of Times, Dies at 84," *New York Times*, May 11, 2006.
[39] Holly Burkhalter, "American Parents and Chinese Babies," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1996.

The Western media condemnations provoked drastic reactions from China and debates in the United States over the truthfulness of the two films and the HRW publication. China provided a completely different story of Chinese orphans and counterattacked with U.S. violations of human rights. Two months after *The Dying Rooms* aired, China released a documentary entitled *A Patchwork of Lies* to counter the film by revisiting all the filmed places and interviewed people and providing evidence and witnesses to the contrary. A *New York Times* article also questioned on January 15, 1996, "Does China Have the Will to Starve Orphans?" A viewer, Walter Goodman, commented that it was possible to be touched by the pictures of the sickly children in the film, but the same possible to "withhold a judgment" that the Chinese authorities neglected orphans to die as a national policy. Goodman then pointed out that the film had its "weakness" as the filmmakers drew too much attention to "its own good intention in journeying thousands of miles in search of the worst orphanages the country could offer."[40] In the meantime, the publication of HRW/Asia report *Death by Default* also provoked sharp criticism from both the Chinese government and the West, so much so that the HRW/Asia responded with a follow-up article.[41]

China then mobilized the same human rights discourse against the United States. In April 1996, the videotaped beating of Mexican illegal immigrants by Riverside County police officers in California was circulated repeatedly on Chinese television stations and leading newspapers. Chinese commentators used the beating as an example of U.S. hypocrisy in that it attacked China's human rights practices while its own law enforcement agents were engaged in "violence against unarmed civilians." A *People's Daily* editorial, usually considered as the voice of the Chinese government, commented that the United States had always labeled itself as an exemplar of human rights and censured developing countries for their human rights conditions, "but this time they outdid themselves."[42]

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[40] Walter Goodman, "Television Review; The Film at the Root of the Outcry Over Orphans," *New York Times,* January 24, 1996.
[41] Human Rights Watch, "Chinese Orphanages: A Follow Up," March 1, 1996, accessed March 20, 2014, http://www.hrw.org/zh-hans/reports/1996/03/01/chinese-orphanages.
[42] "China Blasts U.S. Human Rights Record," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1996.

U.S. prospective/adoptive parents and adoption agencies also joined in the Chinese government in criticizing the accusations made by the films and the HRW, and/or expressed their sympathy to and support of China. The HRW publication was reported to have "hit like a bomb" in the community of (prospective) adoptive parents. Many faxed letters of support to the Chinese government, so much so that Chinese officials requested the writers to stop, saying that the outpouring was clogging their fax machines.[43] The White House was also flooded with letters from parents defending the Chinese government and opposing U.S. support for human rights resolution against China at the forthcoming UN Human Rights Commission Meeting in Geneva. Adoptive parents holding their Chinese babies were also reported to be giving press conference all over the country.[44] Adoption agencies also responded actively. Janice Neilson, executive director of World Association for Children and Parents, a Seattle-based adoption agency, commented that he had found "the opposite of what is described in the report," and that to blame another country is hypocritical.[45] Filis M. Casey, an executive of an adoption agency in Wellesley, Massachusetts, wrote a letter to the *Washington Post*, proving that conditions had been "vastly improved" in the orphanages where the staff were committed to offering a "safe, healthy and loving environment," and that the Chinese government had "demonstrated strong commitment" to the care and protection of its orphans. He also suggested that encouraging adoption efforts to "provide homes for the homeless orphans" was more important than criticizing "what may have occurred in the not-so-recent past."[46]

The attitude of the prospective/adoptive parents and the adoption agencies both unsettles and echoes the rescue narrative in the Western media. On the one hand, their support of China might be triggered by a fear that China would be angered and suspend transnational adoption. It has already happened in 1993, only one year after the Chinese Adoption Law opened the door for transnational adoption. The suspension lasted for ten months due to increasing cases of illegal

[43] "Abuse Charges Stir Adoptive Parents," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1996.
[44] "American Parents and Chinese Babies," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1996.
[45] "Abuse Charges Stir Adoptive Parents," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1996.
[46] "Children in Chinese Orphans," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1996.

adoption and children being smuggled out of the country.[47] Therefore, the attacks launched by the Western media and HRW against the Chinese government particularly upset the waiting adoptive parents and adoption agencies, suggesting that adopting Chinese orphans was more about supplying a U.S. adoption market made up of prospective/adoptive parents than a humanistic obligation and act of rescue as represented in the U.S. media. On the other hand, Casey's advocacy of "providing homes for the homeless orphans" coincides with the narrative of rescue and what human rights campaigners Holly Burkhalter and Philip Bake advocated, namely that China should give Western adoptive parents full access to Chinese orphans. In the mid-1990s, therefore, adoption from China became a complex issue in which narratives of rescue, advocacy of human rights for Chinese orphans, anti-Communist ideology against the Chinese government, and demand from the Western adoption market were entangled.

Big Love Beyond Borders

Although in the 1990s the Chinese media rarely touched on the issue even as the Western media was full of reports about Chinese orphans, orphanages, and adoption from China, in the 2000s, some Chinese newspapers and websites, and occasionally television stations, started to pay attention to the phenomenon. In this coverage, transnational adoption is depicted as evidencing the beauty of humanity and as a collaboration between China and Western adoptive parents to create a bright, happy future full of opportunities and "big love" beyond national, racial, and cultural borders for the institutionalized orphans. In this process, the role of the United States is minimized, and China is constructed as a modern, confident, caring, and responsible sending country. Two programs, the *News 1+1* on November 29, 2009 entitled "Chinese Children, The World Adopts," and the *Ethic Review* on August 13, 2016 entitled "Root-searching," both released by CCTV and focusing on Chinese adoptees' heritage tour, exemplify the narrative of "big love beyond borders."

[47] "Children in Chinese Orphans," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1996.

As the largest and only state television station in China, CCTV is the most important television source and enjoys the highest national rating. Thus, its report of transnational adoption, though rare, was tremendously influential among Chinese viewers. As one of the key mouthpieces of the Chinese government, CCTV is highly political. Programs produced by CCTV are not only widely circulated in mainland China, but are also well-received among overseas Chinese. The *News 1+1* and the *Ethic Review* are two programs commonly known by most Chinese. The former, airing on the News Channel, is a daily talk show hosted by famous news commentator Bai Yansong and hostess Dong Qian, who choose and interpret the latest and hottest news. The latter aired on Channel 12 (the Society and Law Channel), targeting current ethical events with an aim to "stimulate goodness" among viewers by "eulogizing good deeds" and "disclosing unethical phenomena," as the CCTV website introduces.[48] Different as they are, the two programs have produced similar ideologies about China, Western adoptive parents, and transnational adoption through their reports on the heritage tours.

In both programs, China is constructed as the "root" and "home" of the adoptees, in which Chinese people open their arms and warmly welcome the returning children. The adoptees are filmed expressing how they "feel at home" in China. In the *News 1+1*, news commentator Bai recalls that in 2008 when a group of Chinese adoptees returned to Yangzhou city, the deputy mayor addressed them at the welcome banquet as "not guests. You and We are one family." Similarly, in the *Ethic Review*, the children and their adoptive families are shot visiting their original orphanages where the staff members greet them with smiles and hugs. A big red slogan of "warmly welcome the children home" is seen hanging on the front of the orphanage building. One orphanage director says that no matter where the adoptees go, their "root is here. Home is here." Thus, unlike the Western media which describes China as a callous Communist country that abandoned and deliberately neglected orphans, the two programs represent it as a warm and loving home for the returning adoptees.

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[48] "Daode Guancha"道德觀察[Ethic Review], accessed May 25, 2017, http://tv.cctv.com/lm/ddgc/.

China is also constructed as a modern country with splendid traditional culture actively seeking the best interests of Chinese orphans by looking for loving homes all over the world for them. In both programs, the adoptees are filmed learning Chinese calligraphy and visiting the Great Wall. Though acknowledging the importance of tradition, China is not portrayed as the dark, patriarchal, premodern country often depicted in the Western media, but as bright, friendly, and modern, represented by light rail trains and newly built skyscrapers covered with glass. The *Ethic Review* introduces how China has established bilateral relationships for inter-country adoption with seventeen countries, found homes for more than 150,000 orphaned and/or disabled Chinese children, and provided these children, through transnational adoption, with opportunities to receive good education and develop hobbies and talents. Both programs also emphasize that China has high-standard adoption regulations that guarantee the children to not only be adopted by appropriate families but also be closely supervised by the Chinese adoption agency, namely CCAA (or CCCWA since 2011), after their adoption. More importantly, with the help of the Chinese government represented by the agency, these children found "amazing, loving, caring, supportive" families that include "everything a family should be," as Amanda, one of the adoptee interviewees, describes in the *Ethic Review*. Although the narrative of adoptive families as loving and caring resembles U.S. media portrayals, here Amanda's comments, together with what China has done for the children as described in the two programs, convinces viewers that China is a responsible sending country overseeing the best interests of its children.

State-run orphanages, as another representative of the Chinese government, are also portrayed as loving, caring, and providing good care of the children before their adoption. The *Ethic Review* features one adoptive family, comprised of Hannah, Noah and their adoptive parents, visiting Noah's original orphanage in Guangdong Province. The two children are shot being immediately surrounded and hugged by nannies and the director in the orphanage. Their adoptive mother appears on the screen, telling viewers how twelve years have passed since Noah was adopted but the director and nannies who are "so nice," "welcoming," and "kind," are "still

here" waiting to welcome them. She also recalls, almost with tears in her eyes, that Hannah was well taken care of at her orphanage and that when the orphanage director thanked the couple for bringing Hannah back, her husband thanked them for "saving my daughter's life." The *Ethic Review* also shows several pictures of the adoptees before their adoption. In one picture, seven babies are sitting on a red couch, looking well-fed and well-dressed (figure 3). Therefore, contrary to the Western media that represented Chinese orphanages as systematically and intentionally neglecting orphans and leaving them to die, here the state-run orphanages are portrayed as responsible institutions in which orphans are saved, loved, and well tended.

Figure 4.3 *Ethic Review*, CCTV, August 13, 2016

The two programs also highlight the "big love" from the white adoptive parents that transcends racial and national boundaries. In the *News 1+1* while Bai and Dong are talking, the screen shows a number of photos in which white adoptive parents embrace Chinese adoptees. Bai comments that "we," meaning himself and viewers, "would not doubt adoptive parents' love," without which "they would not have made such a choice (of adopting the children)." In the *Ethic Review*, one adoptive parent is filmed recalling that when seeing her adopted daughter's smiling face for the first time, she forgot that she was Caucasian while her daughter was Chinese. "The moment when seeing the child, maternal love was awakened, crossing national boundaries, crossing races," the voiceover concludes.

However, both programs ensure viewers that the "big love" is not created solely by the Western adoptive parents, but through a collaboration between them and China that has fostered the beauty of humanity through transnational adoption. In the *News 1+1*, Bai comments that as a journalist who reports mostly tragedies, the news about transnational adoption and the heritage tour touches him deeply: "if we report more news like this, (I am wondering) whether the world will become better." While acknowledging that face-saving Chinese people believe "family shame should not be made public," he asserts that China since the 1990s was brave and open enough to allow foreigners to adopt its children, thus co-creating "a type of beauty" with foreign adoptive parents. He urges that when talking about transnational adoption, viewers should forget about "face, politics, and many other aspects," but return to humanity and to children's best interests. His narrative of the "beauty of humanity" then portrays the heritage tour as a win-win event for all parties: China, Western adoptive parents, Chinese adoptees, and orphanage staff who welcome them. Viewing China, the sending country, as a winner, Bai regards the tour and its Chinese media coverage as a symbol that China is turning more confident. China's confidence in the twenty-first century is primarily displayed in its increasing economic prosperity and political influence. However, what Bai considers China's confidence also comes from the country's welcome to Chinese adoptees and their adoptive parents back to China rather than shame over the fact that Chinese children were adopted by foreigners, which might suggest that China was not able to take care of its own children. Similarly, the adoptees are winners as well when they return and find that Chinese people, rather than abandoning them, love and welcome them.

What is minimized in the narratives of "big love" and of "beauty of humanity" is the flip side of the adoption story, including the adoptees' birth parents as well as the birth-planning policy and female gender bias to which the Western media pointed as the most important causes behind the large number of female babies being abandoned and placed for transnational adoption. Both programs mention that for various reasons, these adoptees have been abandoned. However, the *Ethic Review* does not mention how and why they were abandoned. The *News 1+1*

mentions the birth-planning policy once, but Bai attributes poverty as the most important reason for baby abandonment and shifts quickly to announce that now situations are getting far better as China develops. While emphasizing the intimacy between the adoptees and their adoptive parents as well as the happy life and abundant opportunities the children now enjoy due to their adoption, the programs completely erase their birth parents. Both programs pay attention to how the adoptive parents talk about the issue of adoption openly with their adoptees, but there is unanimous silence about the children's abandonment and their birth families in the programs, as if the children's lives started in the orphanages rather than with their birth families. It might be argued that the birth families are not mentioned because they simply disappeared after abandoning their children, as U.S. adoptive parents usually believe. Yet I contend that the silence about the birth parents and the birth-planning policy indicates that they are consciously left out of the programs because they are disruptive to the narratives of "beauty of humanity" and "big love beyond borders" that the programs endeavor to construct.

What is also minimized is the role of the United States or any other Western nation in transnational adoption from China. In the *Ethic Review*, when the adoptive parents are interviewed, most of them are labeled as their adoptees' parents, but their own individual identities or nationalities are not included although the narrator mentions that sixty families came from the United States. Interestingly, there are two times when adoptive mothers talk about the racial difference between them and the adoptees as "Caucasian" and "Chinese/Asian." Both times the Chinese translations are *Meizhou Ren* ("someone from the American continent") and Yazhou Ren ("*Asian*"). The choice of *Meizhou Ren* rather than *Meiguo Ren* (someone from the United States) or *Bairen* (a white person, as the word "Caucasian" is usually translated) indicates how the *Ethic Review* removes the national and racial identities of the adoptive parents and instead emphasizes the geographical difference between them and the adopted children. Also, on most occasions the programs lump the white parents together as "foreign parents," indicating how the programs obscure the role of Western nations, particularly the United States, where most

adoptive parents came from. Ironically, while the narratives of "big love beyond borders" and of "beauty of humanity" emphasize China as an open, loving, confident, responsible sending country, it also tries to claim that the Western receiving countries have nothing to do with this "love" and this "beauty."

Babies "Made in China"

Adoption from China since the 1990s is not simply about saving Chinese female orphans from "the dying rooms" and offering them "big love beyond borders." As Dorow observes, in transnational adoption from China, "impossible contradictions" between "rescue and desire, care and market" have been haunting adoption practices and narratives in multiple ways.[49] In the meantime, baby trafficking on the black market is reported to have been connected with transnational adoption, which has made the Western countries into what Laura Briggs views as a "consumer market" comprised of adoptive parents.[50] Though China has been considered by Western (prospective) adoptive parents as having much stricter regulations and less baby trafficking among sending countries, the exposure conducted by investigative media centering upon Chinese baby buying and selling in Hengyang, Hunan Province in 2005 shocked both Chinese people and Western (prospective) adoptive parents. These investigative reports, often drawing connections between "babies made in China" and "products made in China," challenge and complicate the narratives created by both U.S. and Chinese mainstream media. What further complicates the representations of transnational adoption are the many stories of Chinese birth and/or adoptive parents, especially fathers, who desperately searched for daughters snatched by birth-planning officials to fill the international adoption market through state-run orphanages, thus challenging the widespread Western belief that all orphans were abandoned by their birth parents and that Chinese birth fathers only cared about sons.

[49] Dorow, *Transnational Adoptions,* 22, 51
[50] Briggs, *Somebody's Children,* 112.

Although money is not the only concern when American parents consider adoption from China, it is a central issue in the adoption process and after.[51] Adoption from China is considered as "the most affordable" international adoption program, as one adoption website promotes.[52] Adoptive parents have to pay what Kay Johnson calls the "mandatory orphanage donations" of $3,000 per child in the 1990s (which was recently raised to around $5,000) and additional fees and expenses of about $1,000-2,000 in China, to cover accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, translation, and the child's visa application fees. According to Johnson, the vast majority of the donations went to the orphanages and have brought forth improved physical conditions, increased staffing, higher-quality medical care, and "in the best orphanages, improved attention to developmental and educational needs."[53] Besides expenditure in China, adoptive parents also have to pay a number of fees before their arrival to meet the children, including fees paid to adoption agencies. In total, a family usually pays around $35,000 to adopt a Chinese orphan. After adoption, the monetary issue continues to haunt most adoptive parents, as adoptive parents often encounter questions from the public like "how much did she cost?"

The monetary nature of transnational adoption has drawn wide attention in both Chinese investigative media and Western cultural texts, which often portray Chinese orphans as "babies made in China" by using the same vocabulary as used in describing "products made in China." Coincidently, China's rise as the major sending country of adoptees since the 1990s coincided with its simultaneous emergence as the world factory of products for developed countries. With its lower costs, abundant raw materials, and investment policies favorable to Western companies due to China's reform and opening-up policy since 1978, a large number of foreign companies

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[51] Other popular reasons concerning adoption from China includes the "reliable" adoption process because all children are adopted from state-run orphanages, as one adoption website promotes, see "China Program." http://www.aacadoption.com/programs/china-program.html; Chinese babies' desirability in the U.S. black-white racial binary and what Dorow calls the "light baggage" of Chinese babies since all are considered as abandoned and no birth parents would appear, though as I will demonstrate later, this is not necessarily so. See Dorow, *Transnational Adoptions*, 47, 56.

[52] "China Program," accessed July 31, 2017, http://www.aacadoption.com/programs/china-program.html..

[53] Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son*, 143, 144.

opened factories in China, and "made in China" products flooded the whole world. The simultaneous appearance of "products made in China" and "babies made in China" is illustrated in a children's picture book *Made in China: A Story of Adoption* written by Vanita Oelschlager, a writer of several picture books and one of the key members of the publishing house Vanitabooks, LLC. The book narrates the story of a Chinese adoptee whom her elder sister teased as being marked as "made in China," just like the brooms and their toys. The upset adoptee was then assured by her adoptive father that "you are not made like a toy; you were made in China to give us joy."[54] Although with assurance that the adoptee is different from the toys "made in China," the father's words reaffirms that she was "made in China."

The narrative of "babies made in China" appears in the investigative reports of the 2005 baby buying and selling scandal. In November 2005, the police in Hengyang city, Hunan Province solved a case of baby trafficking when they tracked several human traders and accidently found that the backstage manipulators were some welfare houses in Hengyang area. The police soon found that altogether twenty-seven staff in six welfare houses were involved in the scandal, and hundreds of babies had been bought since 2003, including 169 babies in Hengnan Country Welfare House, 232 in Hengshan Country Welfare House, and 409 in Hengyang County Welfare House.[55] In addition to buying babies from human traffickers, the welfare houses were also reported to be accepting babies snatched from Chinese birth or adoptive parents by birth-planning officials who claimed that the parents were illegally adopting the babies without paying the "social support fee," though some of the babies were biological children and not extraquota babies at all. The scandal was investigated and reported by the *Caixin Century Weekly* and republished by other liberal media, such as the *Phoenix News Media* in Hong Kong. According to the *Caixin Century Weekly*, after buying babies from human traffickers or taking the snatched babies from birth-planning officials, the welfare houses then

[54] Vanita Oelschelager, *Made in China: A Story of Adoption* (Vanita Books: 2008), 15.
[55] "Fuliyuan Fanman Ertong Zhu Zhongguo Chengwei Zuida Shouyang Laiyuan Guo"福利院販賣兒童助中國成為最大收養來源國[Welfare Houses Sold Children to Help Make China the Biggest Sending Country of Adoption], *Caixin Century Weekly*, May 24, 2011.

resold some of them to other welfare houses at a much higher price, and "some were sold abroad," as the *Xinhua News Agency* cited from some officials.[56]

The case also reveals that the welfare houses fabricated evidence to prove that the snatched or purchased babies were abandoned ones, and the houses procured Chinese passports for them and qualified them for transnational adoption. When tried in court, Chen Ming, the director of Hengyang County Welfare House, confessed that from October 29, 2002 to November 10, 2005, the house had sent 288 orphans to the United States and European countries.[57] A number of Chinese and international newspapers reported the case, which shocked people all over the world. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the case in January 2006 with a title "Youth-snatching, a Growing Industry in China." In March 2006, the *Washington Post* also reported it with an article entitled "Stealing Babies for Adoption."[58]

Accompanying the coverage of this case is criticism from some Chinese media on the local government represented by the welfare houses, since all welfare houses are state-run. *China Business Herald*, a leading business newspaper in China, labels these houses as "state-run human traffickers." The article comments, "it was not long before the Ministry of Public Security announced it would take severe measures against crimes of baby abduction and trafficking. But who knew the biggest human traffickers are the state cadres and that the wildest human trafficking criminal gang is state-run?"[59] One article published on the website of the *Economic Observer*, another leading economic medium in China famous for its sharp and insightful critiques on current issues, goes further by critiquing the local government as the "human traffickers." It sarcastically comments that "China not only exports clothes and accessory parts. Now babies have turned into another type of commodity to be exported for foreign exchange."[60]

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[56] "Fuliyuan Fanman Ertong Zhu Zhongguo Chengwei Zuida Shouyang Laiyuan Guo."
[57] "Hengyang Fuliyuan Fanying Shijian Zhiyi: Fuliyuan de Yinghai Jingji"衡陽福利院販嬰事件之一：福利院的嬰孩經濟"[Report No. 1 on the Case of Baby Selling in Hengyang Welfare Houses: The Baby Economic of Welfare Houses], accessed May 15, 2017, http://www.5law.cn/info/a/sifa/hunyinjiating/2012/0717/373254.html
[58] "Fuliyuan Fanman Ertong Zhu Zhongguo Chengwei Zuida Shouyang Laiyuan Guo."
[59] Wang Pan 王攀, "Bixu Yancheng Guoying Ren Fanzi"必須嚴懲國營人販子[State-Run Human Traffickers Must be Severely Punished], *China Business Herald*, May 27, 2011.
[60] "Pinglun: Dang Zhengfu Chengwei Ren Fanzi" 評論：當政府成為人販子[Commentary: When the Government Turns into

This article typifies a trend in some Chinese media that associates "babies made in China" with "products made in China" by using economic terms in their representations of transnational adoption. It elaborates that Chinese babies were commodified into standardized goods to be exported because there was an industry chain created by the government: the birth-planning officials "robbed" babies, then the welfare houses "whitewashed" the babies' registration information so that they could become "qualified products"; the welfare houses also bought babies in to make sure the houses had an "ample supply."[61] Like this, representations of foreign adoption on some Chinese newspapers and websites are full of economic terms, such as "expanded reproduction (of babies) driven by interest," "earning foreign exchange through (baby) exports," "baby economy," etc.[62] The narrative of "babies made in China" debunks the narrative of rescue and human rights advocacy over Chinese orphans in the Western media, and the Chinese one of "big love beyond borders," implying that transnational adoption was nothing more than a transaction between China and Western adoptive parents.

Aligned with the narrative of "babies made in China" are the voices of many birth parents, particularly birth fathers quoted in the investigative report conducted by the *Caixin Century Weekly*, who were reported to be desperately looking for children lost or snatched away by birth-planning officials to be placed in the welfare houses for transnational adoption. Yang Libing, a peasant in Hunan Province is a father like this. His first-born daughter Yang Ling was born in 2004, but in 2005 when Yang Libing and his wife went to Shenzhen, a developed coastal city, to work as migrated workers, they were told that their daughter was "robbed" by birth-planning officials under the name of failing to pay the "social support fee." Puzzled by why the birth-planning officials would take his first-born daughter away since the "social support fee" was

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Human Traffickers], *Economic Observer*, May 5, 2011, accessed May 15, 2017. http://www.eeo.com.cn/comment/shp/2011/05/09/200881.shtml

[61] "Pinglun: Dang Zhengfu Chengwei Ren Fanzi."

[62] The article was first reported by *The Beijing News* on June 9, 2011, but I cited from the Phoenix Media of Hong Kong. See "Neidi Shewai Shouyang Diaocha: Lingyangren Xu Xiang Fuliyuan 'Juan' 3.5 Wanyuan"内地涉外收養調查：領養人需向福利院'捐'3.5 萬元[Adoption Investigation in Mainland: Adopters are Supposed to 'Donate' 35,000 Yuan to the Welfare House, accessed May 15, 2017, http://news.ifeng.com/mainland/detail_2011_06/09/6896787_0.shtml.

often charged for extra quota babies, Yang later speculated that since he and his wife were away from home and his parents were taking care of their daughter, the officials mistook the old couple as having illegally "adopted" the baby. When Yang's father went to the birth-planning office in the town to take his granddaughter back, he was told that he had to pay￥6,000 RMB first. Unable to borrow such a big sum of money, he was told the next day that even if he paid ￥10,000, the baby would not be returned to him. Yang rushed back to his hometown and to the welfare house after clashing with the birth-planning officials, but his daughter was lost until four years later when he accidentally found out that she was adopted into the United States. Years of searching for their daughter relegated the Yangs to poverty. After knowing that their daughter was in the United States, Yang's wife Zeng Zhimei urged him to bring the girl back. According to what Yang told the news reporter, his wife finally left him because she saw no meaning living with Yang when he was unable to bring their daughter back. Yang ended his story by claiming that "if only I am alive, I am determined to take my daughter back."[63]

Yang's story counters both the narrative of rescue in the Western media and the Chinese one of "big love beyond borders." For one thing, rather than being abandoned, his daughter was cherished and loved by his family. For another, the girl's adoption into the United States was not out of the "big love" co-created by the Hengyang Welfare House and her American adoptive parents, who, as the story claims, were only the supplier and buyers of the baby "made in China," and the process of "making" her into a product eligible for transnational adoption was extremely violent and brutal.

Yang's story also challenges the narrative of the Western media and white adoptive parents that portrays Chinese birth fathers as callous, patriarchal oppressors of their victimized wives who were left with no option except to abandon their baby daughters. The story presents Yang as a loving but powerless father who, despite all his efforts, failed to bring his daughter back and to

[63] "Hunan Jisheng Guanyuan Qiang Yinger Mouli Meiming 3000 Meiyuan Waixiao"湖南計生官員搶嬰兒牟利每名3000美元外銷[Hunan Birth-Planning Officials Robbed Babies For Sale to Foreign Countries for 3,000 Dollars Each], originally reported by the *Caixin Century Weekly*, republished by the *Phoenix News Media*, accessed May 30, 2017, http://news.ifeng.com/mainland/detail_2011_05/08/6244700_4.shtml.

prevent his family from being torn apart. Likewise, his wife is depicted not as a silent, passive victim but a woman who used her agency to leave her husband. Yang's story was rare but not exceptional. In the Hengyang baby selling scandal, another Zeng couple who lost one of their twin daughters also found out that the daughter has been adopted into the United States. Seeing his daughter's picture, the father immediately recognized her and exclaimed that "she was not abandoned; she was snatched from me!"[64] The two stories powerfully speak back to Western media representations that all Chinese female adoptees were abandoned by their birth parents.

Since Yang's first-born biological daughter could be taken away in the name of an illegally adopted child, those who adopted or gave birth to extraquota children were even more vulnerable. In the Hengyang scandal, a large number of the "robbed" children were extra-quota ones in their birth families, who were particular targets of birth-planning officials since their birth was against the policy, but their stories challenge the widely held belief in the Western world that extraquota babies, especially female ones, were all abandoned by their parents. Another group of children snatched by birth-planning officials was domestically adopted children. Yuan Youming and his wife, a peasant couple with two sons, met an abandoned girl one day and decided to adopt her. After returning to their hometown, they applied to the town government for adoption, and had the girl registered into their household—which means they legally adopted her after paying for the "social support fee" of￥2,000 RMB. However, two months later, the birth-planning officials took the girl away with the excuse that the adoption was "illegal." When trying to get his daughter back, Yuan was told that he could only claim her back if he paid another￥30,000 RMB, but the next day when he brought the required money to the birth-planning office, his daughter was already gone. Because both the 1991 and 1999 adoption laws require that only birth parents, custodians, and welfare houses can legally place a child for adoption, for those abandoned children, the welfare houses became the only legal presenters, so those who adopted outside the institutions were deemed as "illegally adopted" by birth-planning

[64] "Hunan Jisheng Guanyuan Qiang Yinger Mouli Meiming 3000 Meiyuan Waixiao."

officials. Even for the children placed by birth parents to adoptive parents, the adoptive parents had to apply to the welfare houses for adoption, which often involved too much red tape and a large sum of money, in the name of "social support fee" paid to the welfare houses, although the child had never been placed in one. Unlike Yang and Zeng who found that their daughters had been adopted into the United States, Yuan never found his adopted daughter. However, as the title of the report "Hunan Birth-Planning Officials Snatched Babies and Sold to Foreigners for $3,000 US Dollars Each" hints, it was highly likely that his daughter was also adopted by foreigners.

Yuan's story indicates how transnational adoption affected Chinese domestic adoption in various ways. As Kay Johnson observes, since the enforcement of the birth-planning policy in the 1980s, a large number of girls were adopted outside the welfare houses and the authorities turned a deaf ear to such a phenomenon because the welfare houses were already crammed with abandoned babies. Johnson found that:

> Although only about 10,000 to 15,000 domestic adoptions were officially registered each year from 1980 through 1991, sample survey data indicate that the real figure was much higher, perhaps over 500,000 in the late 1980s, if private and unregistered adoptions are included. The evidence also suggests that the numbers of such adoptions have increased significantly in recent years and that an increasingly large majority of these informal, unreported adoptions are girls.[65]

Johnson's research on Chinese domestic adoption reveals that informal, unregistered adoptions were thriving since the 1980s. But Yuan's story in the Hengyang scandal shows that in 2005, a year when U.S. adoption from China reached to its peak, regulations on domestic adoption was getting more stringent and the babies informally adopted were at high risk of being taken away from their adoptive parents. That is to say, when the demand for adoptable babies in the international adoption market was high, domestically adopted ones were especially vulnerable.

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[65] Johnson, *Wanting A Daughter, Needing a Son*, 6.

Transnational adoption also affected domestic adoption financially. Originally domestic adoptive parents paid far less than their foreign counterparts. In the early 1990s, while foreign adoptive parents were usually required to "donate" $3,000 US dollars, domestic ones only needed to pay around￥100-250 RMB. However, as the demands of the foreign market rapidly increased from the mid-1990s, especially after the Western media and HRW condemnations against the Chinese government and state-run orphanages, domestic adoptive parents had to pay almost as much as foreign adoptive parents, which is why Yuan was required to pay￥30,000 RMB to get his adopted daughter back, and even if he was willing to pay, he could never find her because the huge demand in the foreign adoption market of 2005 permitted available babies to be quickly adopted by foreigners.

An old couple's adoption story in Nanjing further indicates how the rising price of transnational adoption profoundly influenced fees involved in domestic adoption. The couple, Chen Zaihua and his wife, took a boy home from the local welfare house as their foster child in February 2008. They applied to adopt him in 2009, but the welfare house required them to pay a "donation" of￥26,000 RMB. When they finally managed to gather such a big sum, they were told that the "donation" has risen to￥30,000 to 40,000 because the amount of "donations" from foreign adopters had risen. As the director of the welfare house claimed, the house set the sum of "donation" required from Chen according to the "donation" money set by the CCAA to foreign adoption. An article published in *China Newsweek* noted that the practice of charging domestic adoptive parents by referring to donations of foreign adoption became common among welfare houses in China.[66] Such a practice ignored the fact that the exchange rate of RMB to US dollars was 6.8:1, that per capita disposable income was￥17,175 RMB in urban areas and￥5,353 RMB in rural areas in 2009, and that many domestic adoptive parents were poor.[67] Tragically, in

[66] The article was first published in *China Newsweek*, a news magazine issued by *China News Service*, one of the only two news agencies (the other is Xinhua News Agency), but was republished by multiple websites and newspapers. I cite here from sohu.com, one of the largest websites in China. See "Kuaguo 'Zhongguo Guer' Tuxian Shouyang Shiye Youlǜ"跨國'中國孤兒'凸顯收養事業憂慮[Transnational Chinese Orphans Makes Concerns in Adoption Prominent], accessed May 31, 2017, http://learning.sohu.com/20130104/n362390798.shtml.

[67] The figures of per capita disposable income of 2009 was released on January 21, 2010 by the China State Statistics Bureau, as

September 2009, the welfare house notified the Chens that the boy would be adopted by a French family.[68]

In addition to affecting domestic adoption financially, foreign adoption also made domestic adoption more difficult. On July 24, 2006, *Global Times*, an English newspaper issued by the *People's Daily*, one of the key mouthpieces of the Chinese government, comments that Chinese were not welcomed in Chinese orphanages. The article differentiates the Chinese government from local welfare houses: it confirms that the former supported domestic adoption (since China joined in the Hague Convention which privileges domestic adoption over foreign adoption) but admits that foreign adoption was much easier and more welcomed in local welfare houses. These houses, according to the article, set up multiple barriers to prevent Chinese from adopting orphans from the institutions, because fewer Chinese could pay the $3,000 US dollars compared to foreign adopters.[69] That is, many children were adopted by Westerners not because they and their countries are more humanitarian and loving, but because they had more economic capital and enjoyed the privilege given by the welfare houses to adopt Chinese orphans.

The news reports of the Hengyang case and similar reports about the predicaments of domestic adoptive parents also challenge Western media claims that female orphans are unwanted in China and that only Western countries led by the United States could offer them a permanent home. Johnson observes that in contrast to "widespread belief outside China," contemporary Chinese culture "increasingly values daughters as a source of emotional support and closeness for parents." The ideal family for most people in contemporary China is to have a son and a daughter, thus many domestic adoptive parents do not favor sons over daughters, but tend to adopt "the missing gender" to complete the ideal. Her research on nearly 800 Chinese

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reported by Xinhua News website. See "Tongjiju: 2009 Chengzhen Jumin Renjun Ke Zhipei Shouru Zengzhang9.8%"統計局：2009 城鎮居民人均可支配收入增長 9.8%[Bureau of Statistics: Per Capita Disposal Income for Urban Residents Has Risen 9.8%], accessed, May 31, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2010-01/21/content_12848862.htm.

[68] "Lao Fufu Lingyang Guer Bei Daizhou, Fuliyuan Suoyao Gaoe Feiyong"老夫婦領養孤兒被帶走，福利院索要高額費用[The Orphan Adopted by an Old Couple Was Taken Away. The Welfare House Claims A Large Sum of Fees], *Nanjing Morning Paper,* November 2, 2009.

[69] "Zhongguo Ren Zai Zhongguo Gueryuan Bushou Huanying"中國人在中國孤兒院不受歡迎[Chinese Are not Welcome in Chinese Orphanages], *Global Times,* July 24, 2006.

adoptive families from 1995 to 2000 reveals that of the 263 families with sons, all except 6 families adopted girls. She thus concludes that "these girls were adopted because of their gender, not in spite of it."[70] Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that a large number of domestic adoptive parents provided homes for female orphans during a period when the Western media depicted them as homeless and unwanted.

Conclusion:

In post-1990s adoption from China, a convention, originated in Cold War adoption from Hong Kong, in which adoption functioned as a site of power and media contestations, continued. Anti-Communist ideology and the narrative of rescue that prevailed in U.S. media representations of Cold War adoption from Hong Kong also loomed in the mid-1990s Western media condemnations against China and the state-run orphanages on behalf of Chinese orphans and women. However, sediments of anti-Communist ideology were repacked into these media representations to serve the powerful discourse of human rights advocacy in the 1990s.

Besides narratives constructed by the U.S. and Chinese mainstream media, U.S. prospective/adoptive parents also joined in the media war in the mid-1990s, either to support China or to echo the narrative of rescue. As soon as white families adopting Chinese girls became a public phenomenon in America, more white middle-class adoptive parents joined in producing cultural representations of adoption from China. As the next chapter illustrates, through various mediums, such as documentaries, children's picture books, and memoirs, they constructed adoption narratives that dominate the market of cultural texts about adoption from China and produced meanings about adoption, China, the United States, birth parents, and themselves that bear a similar tone to those produced by the U.S.-led Western media.

[70] Johnson, *Wanting a Daughter, Needing a Son*, 107-8.

CHAPTER 5

Saving China's Lost Daughters from A Fairytale World: White Adoptive Parents' Imagination of Adoption

> "Sometimes I kind of find myself wishing that adoptive parents would stop writing about adoption. Particularly if the subject is transracial adoption. I realize that probably sounds a bit harsh. It's not that an adoptive parent cannot have plenty of good, worthwhile things to say about adoption. But there is SO MUCH of THIS out there… It's not that I think *every* adoption-related story needs to be written by an adopted individual or birthparent. I know some wonderful adoptive parents, and their perspectives *are* important, too. But the traditional adoption narrative in this country is so completely dominated by adoptive parents as a group — THEIR experiences, THEIR emotions, what THEY believe to be "the truth" about their children's adoptions. And that is especially problematic when you have white people clearly looking to take the easy way out and not think about race too hard" (emphasis in the original)[1]
>
> —Nikki, "Why white adoptive parents shouldn't dominate adoption narratives"

As Korean adoptee Nikki has poignantly commented, the vast majority of U.S. conventional adoption narratives are those of white adoptive parents, mostly mothers. This is especially true in narratives of adoption of Chinese children. Among the 75 narratives of adoption from China listed on amazon.com in April 2017, 56 are written by white American adoptive parents. Of these, 49 are written by mothers.[2] These narratives, comprising a large variety of genres, including memoirs, diaries, children's picture books, juvenile fictions, adoption handbooks, travelogues, etc., cover a number of themes, including the parents' own infertility, the adoption process, their relationship with their adopted children, portrayal of China and Chinese orphanages, and imagination of birth parents. These narratives primarily target, and are widely circulated among, adoptive parents, adopted children, and those interested in adopting from China. Besides major commercial publishers, such as Random House, and small independent publishers, including Vanita Books, ECW Press, and the Bowen Press, the Internet

[1] "Why White Adoptive Parents Shouldn't Dominate Adoption Narratives," accessed May 2, 2017, http://arewomenhuman.me/2012/08/29/white-adoptive-parents-dominate-adoption-narrative/.

[2] The vast majority of U.S. adoptive parents are white. Although the specific percentage is unknown, Richard Tessler, Gail Gamache and Liming Liu's quantitative study on American adoptive parents from 1991 to 1997 might provides a hint. Their research shows that among the 526 adoptive parents who participated in their study, 96 percent were Caucasian. See Tessler, Gamache, and Liu, *West Meets East*, 70, 72.

and other self-publishing agencies, such as Balboa Press, Xlibris, Authorhouse, and iUniverse Star, provide a venue for adoptive parents to publish their narratives. For instance, among the 75 books, twenty-two are self-published, including seven published on the CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, and five are digital books on Amazon. Besides books published in print and electronic versions, white adoptive parents' voices and narratives are circulated in other forms of media, such as newspapers, websites, radio and television programs, and documentaries. Taking advantage of diverse media platforms, white adoptive parents have become particularly powerful producers of narratives about adoption in the United States.

This chapter focuses on writings by white adoptive parents to examine how they construct, through imagination, adoption, China, and birth mothers—birth fathers are nearly absent in all these narratives—as well as the United States and themselves as adoptive parents. I choose two types of narratives: adoption fairy tales and writings featuring the imaginary birth mother, because adoptive parents' imagination about adoption from China is vividly exemplified in these two types, and different as they are, both types of narratives perform similar discursive and cultural work in representing adoption from China. For adoption fairy tales, I focus on Rose Lewis's *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* (2000, illustrated by Jane Dyer) and Stephan Molnar-Fenton's *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* (1998, illustrated by Vivienne Flesher). For writings about the birth mother, I discuss Carol Antoninette Peacock's picture book *Mommy Far, Mommy Near* (2000, illustrated by Shawn Costello Brownell) and Karin Evans's adoption memoir *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past* (2000). One major difference between the two is that in the fairy tales, the birth mother or anything about the birth family is minimized or erased, yet the imagination of the birth mother is central in Peacock and Evans's books. However, both narratives juxtapose an ahistorical, patriarchal, premodern China as the producer of abandoned girls and oppressor of Chinese women, with an affluent, modern, free, bright America as the provider of a permanent home and the humanitarian care-giver for Chinese orphans. More importantly, in both types of

writings, imagination is essential, indicating that kinship making based on transnational adoption is fictive.

Nonetheless, since these texts are in distinct genres and target different audiences—the picture books are primarily written for young adoptees and their adoptive parents while Evans's memoir targets prospective/adoptive parents and Western readers who are interested in or concerned with Chinese female orphans and adoption from China—they require different treatments. For the picture books, I pay equal attention to the verbal texts and images, and interrogate how the two elements repeat, reinforce, complement or contradict each other. I also explore how the two books adapt experiences of adoption to fit into the Euro-American classic fairy tales that serve as templates through which readers imagine adoption from China.

For Peacock and Evans's books, I use Chandra Talpade Mohanty's criticism of a U.S.-based feminist gaze upon Third World women as my analytical framework. In her article "Under Western Eyes" written in 1986, Mohanty criticizes the Western feminist discourse that treats Third World women as ahistorical, passive victims with singular, monolithic, and reductive images of the "Third World difference."[34] In 2003, she restructured her argument in the context of global capitalism, and argued that women in the Third World, or what she calls the Two-Third World, are no longer "under Western eyes," but "under and inside the hegemonic spaces" of the First World/One-Third World, yet a monolithic image persists of Third World women.[5] I examine how the two books take a similar Western feminist stance in imagining Chinese birth mothers as passive, powerless victims but utilize different narrative styles. For Evans's memoir, I

[3] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 19.

[4] Although some scholars label twenty-first-century China as the second world, I maintain that in the 1990s when the books are set, China fit into the defining characteristics of a Third World country summarized by Gerald Chaliand as "distorted and highly dependent economies devoted to producing primary products for the developed world and to provide markets for their finished goods; traditional, rural social structures; high population growth; and widespread poverty." It is, therefore, appropriate to take Mohanty's criticism as my analytical framework. The idea of China being a second world country is increasingly seen among scholars, such as Kai K. Kimppa, see Kimpa, "Socially Responsible International Intellectual Property Rights in Software and Other Digitally Distributable Material," in *The Information Society: Emerging Landscapes*. ed. Chris Zielinski, Penny Duquenoy and Kai Kimppa (New York: Springer, 2006), 38. The defining characteristics of Third World countries is seen in Gerard Chaliand, "Third World: definitions and descriptions," *Third World Traveler* (2002), accessed December 20, 2016. http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Third_World/Third_World_Chaliand.html.

[5] Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," 516, 518.

also pay attention to how she weaves together her personal experience, her feelings towards "the lost girls" and women in China, and her career as a journalist, to construct a realistic account, on the one hand, and subjectively interprets Chinese women as victims and China as a patriarchal living hell for both female babies and women, on the other. Putting the four narratives together, I demonstrate how white adoptive parents as cultural producers actively contribute to knowledge production about China and Chinese people, as well as the United States and themselves.

Fairytale Adoption Narratives

Fairy tales are a common genre used in children's picture books on adoption from China, and *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* and *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* are two typical ones written by white adoptive parents. Both portray Caucasian adoptive parent(s) adopting Chinese female babies. The former, written by a single adoptive mother, news producer Rose Lewis, features a modern, independent, single middle-class woman adopting in China, and the latter, written by an attorney adoptive father, Stephan Molnar-Fenton, features a middle-class adoptive father who adopts a baby in China and takes her back to America to join his wife. While the vast majority of adoption narratives are constructed by white adoptive mothers, an analysis on Molnar-Fenton's book offers a glimpse into how white adoptive fathers join in knowledge production about transnational adoption from China and how this narrative differs from those created by white mothers.

The two books are not the only fairytale narratives of adoption from China, but they are the most influential ones written by white adoptive parents. Nancy D'Antonio's *Our Baby from China: An Adoption Story*, Buffi A Young's *Miracle in the Land of Wu*, Mick Verga's *The Lonely Little Horse: A Chinese Adoption Story*, Catherine Conley's *Coming Home: The Journey from Heaven to Your Adopted Home*, as well as Grace Lin's *The Red Thread: An Adoption Fairy Tale,* all utilize the fairytale form to a certain degree. But the authors of *Our Baby from China* and *The Red Thread* are not adoptive parents, and the other books are self-published, thus having limited circulation. *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* and *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey*, however,

are far more influential. Both books are published by well-known commercial publishers and widely circulated not only among adoptive parents and adoptees, but also in schools and public libraries. The publisher of the former, Little, Brown and Company, founded in 1837, is one of the oldest and most distinguished publishing houses in the United States. The latter was published by Dorling Kingdersley, a U.K.-based publisher founded in 1974 as part of Penguin Random House. Both are also illustrated by established artists. Jane Dyer, the illustrator of *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, is a veteran illustrator of over twenty-five children's books and recipient of multiple awards, including two Parent's Choice Honor Books for Illustration and several Notable Children's Trade Book citations.[6] *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* is illustrated by Vivienne Flesher, a winner of several gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators and illustrator of the famous *Lullaby Raft* (written by Naomi Shihab Nye). Of the two books, *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* is even more famous. It won the 2000 *New York Times* best seller and earned several other awards, such as A Child's Magazine's Best Books of 2000 and a Children's Crown Gallery Award. Due to its influence, a scholastic video collection released in 2006 featuring three different families is entitled *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes…and More Stories about Families*. In 2007, Lewis published a follow-up picture book *Every Year on Your Birthday*.

The two adoption fairytale narratives construct adoption from China in multiple ways. Adoption is represented, first of all, as a love story not between a hero and a heroine but between adoptive parent(s) and the child. It is also narrated as a story of rescue foregrounding not the hero saving, marrying, and living with the heroine happily ever after, but the adoptive parent(s) saving the Chinese orphan, adopting her and living with her happily ever after. Adoption is then represented as a "from rags to riches" story in which the forsaken babies from poor families in China immediately turn into beloved members of middle-class white families, not through their own efforts, but through adoption. In these representations, adoption is universalized as a common human experience of love, care, and rescue that obscures the unequal power relations

[6] "Jane Dyer," *R. Michelson Galleries*, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.rmichelson.com/illustration/jane-dyer/.

between the sending and receiving countries and between the birth and adoptive parents. I further demonstrate that the fairytale genre provides the authors and illustrators a platform through which to construct a contrast between the affluent, modern, free, bright, powerful United States as the real world, and an ahistorical, mysterious, premodern, exotic, feminized China as the counter-world and fairytale world.

Adoption as a Fairy Tale

The two books fit into the fairytale genre, though in an implicit way. On the surface, both are situated in contemporary time and neither is associated with fairy tales except for a few words commonly seen in fairy tales: *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* starts its narrative with "once upon a time"; *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* uses the word "wondrous" in its title. It might be contested that such wording alone does not make them fairy tales, since these words are often used in non-fairytale writings as well. Indeed, a common view among scholars of fairy tale studies is that it is almost impossible to give fairy tales a satisfactory definition, since the genre is so "volatile and fluid," and that the term itself resists any universally accepted definition.[7] However, folklore scholars have also listed some vital characteristics of fairy tales, including "magic and enchantment" as the "hegemonic associations" of fairy tales; "happily ever after" as the "signature mark"; "a spatial indeterminacy of setting" that matches the "temporal determinacy"; character depictions that are far from realistic, such as "there lived" a man, a woman, etc.; and "something lacking" that presents "the morphological equivalent of abduction."[8] Fairies are not necessary in fairy tales and magic can be implied rather than explicit.[9] More importantly, fairy tales usually contain the theme of rescue and fulfillment of a goal through salvation— a brave hero appears to save the abducted heroine whose "female ideal

[7] Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tales: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 22.
[8] See Cristina Bacchilego, *Fairy Tales Transformed?*: *Twenty-First Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 5; and Valdimir YAkovlevich Propp, *Russian Folklore by Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), 151-152.
[9] Marina Warner, *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tales* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 42;

matches the ideal of the male hero" — and there is always a fairytale world countering the reality world of the storyteller.[10] After the rescue task is fulfilled, the hero and heroine typically return to the real world followed by marriage and a crown for the hero.[11]

I Love You Like Crazy Cakes and *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* have these characteristics. Both books narrate how the adoptive parent departs from the modern, affluent world to save the female Chinese baby who is trapped in an orphanage in a faraway, fairytale, ahistorical, Other world, then adopt the child, return to the real world with her and live happily ever after. In both books, some kind of magic or wonder occurs in the process of adoption. *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* contains what Marina Warner calls "an implied magic."[12] The book narrates the adoption process in the first person in the adoptive mother's voice. After she meets the girl and feels they are a perfect match, she whispers while looking at the baby, "How did this happen? How did someone make this perfect match a world away? Did the Chinese people have a special window to my soul?" (10). The adoptive mother and the child, therefore, are depicted as the predestined match united by some Chinese magic, enchanted by "Chinese people" who, like wizards and witches, exerted magic power by using "a special window" to look into the soul of the adoptive mother. China is thus both exoticized and mystified in the narrative of "the right match."

In *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey*, the magic power is seen in the book's adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's *The Ugly Duckling* by narrating, in the adoptee's voice, her transformation from an unwanted, ugly ducking to a beautiful swan through her two journeys—her adoption into America and her return to China in her dream. The book does not emphasize the adoption process, but stresses and compares the two worlds to which she belongs before and after adoption. The image of the white swan appears several times. On the title page, the only image is a white swan sitting still in its nest. The swan also appears on her birth

[10] Both Jack Zipes and Propp emphasize the key theme of rescue in fairy tales. See Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tales*, 9, 13 and Propp, *Russian Folklore*, 162.
[11] Propp, *Russian Folklore*, 161-168.
[12] Warner, *Once Upon A Time*, 4.

mother's blouse when she was born on a train "as it passed a long, dark tunnel" (2). These two images suggest that An Mei is and was born to be a white swan, but not until she is adopted by her white adoptive parents through whom she finds love and security does she transform into one. The story ends with a dream she has—her second wondrous journey—about "a train passing through a long, dark tunnel," but at the end of the tunnel "was a white swan swimming on a blue lake" (28). The illustration of the dream echoes the scene where she was born, as portrayed in the first spread, but in the first image the lake is empty, while in this one a white swan swims elegantly, implying that An Mei looks back on China, faces her traumatic past, and transforms from a relinquished child, or ugly duckling, into a happy, beloved, beautiful white swan.

The illustrations in these two books also help create the atmosphere of fairy tales. Critics comment that Jane Dyer's warm color and light strokes add a cozy mood to *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, and that her illustration helps "soften the more difficult aspects of the story," especially the fate of the unknown birth mother.[13] I argue, however, that Dyer's painting borrows elements of Chinese landscape painting that stresses the colors of landscape, for instance, bluish grey, a color frequently used in the portrayal of mountains, to create a harmony between human and nature and a combination of virtuality and reality. Dyer achieves this combination, which is essential for the creation of a fairytale atmosphere, by emphasizing the harmony between objects and space and leaving large area of blank spaces in each picture. *An-Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* uses water-soluble color pencil to superimpose and mix image upon image, or polish images with water, depicting a fairytale world composed of tranquil night sky, dark forest, mysterious lake, and grassland.

The combination of the two genres, picture books and fairy tales, creates a powerful narrative through which adoption as a difficult issue can be conveyed to young adopted children in a more distanced, romanticized way. Compared with picture books on adoption written in

[13] 收养的人, "I Love You Like A Crazy Cakes (Review)" *Red Thread Broken: Exposing Red Thread Myth in Relation to Adoption* (Blog). https://redthreadbroken.wordpress.com/2014/03/27/i-love-you-like-crazy-cakes-review/. Accessed on January 12, 2017; Heather Davis, "How I Found You," *New York Times*, November 19, 2000.

realistic genres, such as Peacock's *Mommy Far, Mommy Near*, the fairytale adoption narrative is especially attractive. For one thing, under the strong influence of American Disney fairytale culture, the classic fairy tales into which these adoption picture books are adapted creates a sense that the adopted children, like the heroines in Disney fairy tales, are loved and cherished by their adoptive parents.[14] For another, the fairytale genre is a convenient instrument for adoptive parents to deal with the trauma of relinquishment that most Chinese adoptees have to face sooner or later in a more distanced way. As Susan Steward argues, fairy tales as a distressed genre—meaning the imitation of old forms to emphasize "their artifact nature" —create distance from the immediate environment and simultaneously rationalize "a particular account of origins and the natural."[15] That is, the fairytale genre distances the adoptees from her trauma of being abandoned by situating her in the old fairytale form as a way of rationalizing her adoption.

Adoption as a Story of Rescue

However, fairy tales as a genre are not solely created for children; they also speak to adults and reflect adult understandings of childhood. Thus, they are inevitably encoded with ideological narratives.[16] An analysis of the two books offers a unique perspective for interrogating how the narratives, told as a story of rescue, love, and "from rags to riches," are infused with ideologies about race, gender, and nation.

The two books adapt the story of rescue between the hero and the heroine into one between the adoptive parent and the child. In both books, the child is depicted as trapped and unclaimed in the orphanage—equivalent to what Propp summarizes as the "morphological

[14] Scholars of fairytale studies have argued how Disney Studios dominate the creation of fairy tale films and how these films affect behaviors of girls in, for instance, dressing and the roles they take in school plays. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that fairytale narratives of adoption affect the ways in which young adoptee readers look at themselves. See Jack Zipes, "Grounding the Spell: The Fairy Tale Film and Transformation," in *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity* by Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix, ed. (Urban Institute: University Press of Colorado, 2010), xii; Linda Persing and Lisa Gablehouse, "Disney's Enchanted: Patriarchal Backlash and Nostalgia in a Fairy Tale Film," in Greenhill and Matrix's *Fairy Tale Films*, 154; Karen E. Wohlwend, "Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity Texts through Disney Princess Play," *Reading Research Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 2009): 57.

[15] Susan Steward, "Notes on Distressed Genre" *The Journal of American Folklore* 104, no. 411 (Winter, 1991): 3, 19.

[16] Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tales*, 20; Steward, "Notes of Distressed Genres," 19-20.

abduction" of the heroine, and waiting to be rescued and adopted by the adoptive parents. Moreover, the adoptive parent feels obliged to rescue the trapped baby. The narrative of obligation is striking in *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes,* which emphasizes that the baby lacks a mother to love her, and that the adoptive mother is the very mother chosen by some sort of Chinese magic, though her own lack of a baby also echoes the fact that many Westerners adopt Chinese babies because they either suffer from infertility or have no partners with whom to produce children. Sarah Dorow has observed in her interview of adoptive parents in the early 2000s that "saving" Chinese children was only "a complementary justification" for adopting from China rather than the first reason.[17] However, in these fairytale picture books, the narratives of rescue and of obligation play out prominently.

The narrative of rescue in these books also resembles classic fairy tales by naturalizing the female gender of the rescued. In both books, the adopted child is a girl, and *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* takes the adopted child's female gender as given by conflating "babies" with "girls" in the verbal text (1). On the first page, after narrating that a baby girl lived in a big room with many other babies, the next sentence changes the word "babies" directly into "the girls," although the illustration shows only numerous heads of the babies in the cribs and the babies' gender is unclear (1). Lewis presents it as a fact that only girls lived in the orphanage. Such a portrayal of the adoptee's gender as female is consistent both with U.S. dominant media representations that in China only girls were abandoned by their birth parents and adopted by Westerners and with the convention of classic fairy tales that the rescued is usually a female.

Taking the adopted child's female gender as given, the two books also reflect the middle-class social norms of female passivity and dependency contained in classic fairy tales that feminists have long critiqued. Since the 1970s, feminist scholars have noted that fairy tales "gloss the heroine's inability to act assertively, total reliance on external rescue, willing bondage of father and prince, and her restriction to hearth and nursery." According to these scholars,

[17] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 50.

fairytale traits have been transferred into real life cultural norms for women that "exalt passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a female's cardinal values."[18] In these fairytale adoption narratives, we see similar trend in which the adopted children must rely upon external rescue from their white adoptive parents, encouraging the ideology of dependency of adoptees upon their adoptive parents. This aligns with some adult adoptees' recent critique that mainstream American society infantilizes adoptees as perpetual children dependent upon their adoptive parents.[19] Just like classic fairy tales that transmit the ideology of feminine dependency and passivity among female readers, the fairytale adoption narratives serve to reinforce adoptee dependency upon adoptive parents among adoptee readers.

The narrative of rescue also foregrounds the contrast between two worlds, the real world of the narrator and the fairytale world as a counter-world. This contrast accentuates a modern, abundant America with an ahistorical, rural, or fairy-land China that shrinks into an ancient, imaginary, static setting. In *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, there are only three pictures of China, all looking plain, simple, and without any decoration. On the first page where the babies and nannies are shown in the orphanage, the wall is plain grey and blank with a big old-style wooden window. The second, showing the hotel room after the baby has been adopted, features only the baby, whose background is only the bed on which she sits, covered with what looks like home-dyed dark blue sheets. The third one features the baby's crib in the hotel room. Although it looks much bigger than the ones in the orphanage, everything in it is plain except a yellow, comfortable blanket dotted with stars, which, as the adoptive-mother narrator states, has been brought from the United States. That is to say, while no other aspects of China, except the orphanage and the hotel room, is represented in this book, the image of China through these pictures is simple, drab, and excluded from modernity.

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[18] This argument is seen, for example, in Karen E. Rowe's "Feminism and Fairy Tales," *Women's Studies* 6 (1979): 237.

[19] In an adult adoptee anthology, *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype*, adult adoptees poignantly point out that adoptees, no matter how old they are, are stereotyped in American society as the perpetually "quintessential perfect child, the grateful and obedient adoptee," and that the myth of perpetual child makes many adult adoptees "invisible" in their daily life. See Diane Christian and Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston, ed., *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype* (The An-Ya Project: 2013), 15-6.

On the contrary, affluent, modern, friendly, loving America is symbolized by everything the baby encounters once she steps into the country. Now the girl wearing fancy clothes is puzzled by her new room crammed with presents. In her adoptive mother's middle-class house, friends and neighbors surround her, showing their love, and children are standing beside her new, oval crib—as compared with rectangular cribs with iron or wooden bars in China that might remind readers of those in the state-run orphanages in the 1995 documentary *The Dying Rooms*—holding presents and waiting for her to wake up. This image constructs the United States as abundant, and foregrounds the warm, comfortable, bright, cozy middle-class household owned by white people who shower the baby with love and attention. Much like Nixon asserted in his 1959 "kitchen debate" with Khrushchev that "American superiority in the [C]old [W]ar rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban home," at the turn of the twenty-first century, the affluent, modern, middle-class home ideal continued to construct U.S. superiority and exceptionalism.[20] This book thus discursively performs the work of U.S. nation-building by demonstrating that America is a rich, comfortable, secure nation, a permanent home provider, and a humanitarian and loving care-giver for Chinese orphans.

An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey contrasts the two worlds in a similar way, though it paints the counter-world of China in much more detail. Three paintings portraying China in an omniscient view deserve close reading. The first spread starts the narrative by stating that An Mei was born on a train when it "passed through a long, dark tunnel," (2). The illustration is a piece of wild land, with a lake surrounded by mountains, while a train resembling a snake is squeezing into one of the mountains. The mountains are painted in black, dark purple, and dark green, and the lake is deep blue. These dark colors, together with the image of the snake-like train, construct China as a scary and mysterious fairytale world. The second painting is a bustling rural market place with men and women carrying baskets of fruits, and children staring at An Mei and her birth mother while sucking sugarcanes. The dominant color of this page is red,

[20] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books), 11-13.

reminding readers of a fiery inferno, an image stressed by the text depicting that an "upside-down metal can" is roasting sweet potatoes, with flames "flicker[ing] and snap[ping] like a dragon's tongue"(5). The image of "a dragon's tongue" here both symbolizes China, since the Chinese consider themselves as descendants of the dragon, and demonizes China in the Western world in which the biblical image of Satan is an ancient snake or dragon, and in which dragons are deemed a dangerous, evil monsters. The third image portrays China in an ahistorical setting deprived of modernity. This one is a bird's-eye view of Wuhan city, the capital city of Hubei province, where An Mei was relinquished by her birth mother outside the orphanage. The book is published in 1998, and Wuhan is a metropolitan city and one of the economic and transportation centers of China, but in this picture it is painted as an ancient Chinese town cramped and disorderly with old-style, pitched-roof houses.

Compared with the ahistorical, fairytale world of China, the United States is depicted as modernized and wealthy, as can be seen in another picture painted from the omniscient perspective. After the adoptive father adopts the child from the orphanage and brings her back to the United States, the adoptive mother, wearing a long green skirt, waits for them in a crowded place which might be the airport. There people with hair of different colors carry suitcases and wear colorful, fashionable clothes; the background color is yellowish orange, suggesting a warm, joyful, modern world with well-to-do people. Both books, therefore, create a binary between America as a rich, modern real world and China as ahistorical, mysterious fairytale world.

The two contrastive worlds are gendered as well. China is feminized through the omission of men, but the United States is depicted as consisting of people with clear, middle-class heteronormative gender roles. The feminization of China is exemplified in *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes.* The only scene where Chinese people can be seen is the first page in which three nannies are taking care of the babies in the cribs in the orphanage. The nannies are portrayed as country women wearing black, home-made shoes; their hair is either braided or in a bun—the former style was for unmarried country girls and the latter was for married women in feudal China.

Through such a selective, gendered, and outdated representation, China is feminized and perpetuated as an ancient, rural world.

In contrast, the United States is depicted in these books with middle-class people of clear-cut gender roles consistent with the ideology of white nuclear families. *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* portrays the adoptive father's masculine paternal role as a protector and savior of the baby from the orphanage and the breadwinner in his family while his wife is a nurturer of the baby. After the father returns home with the baby, her caretaking falls upon the adoptive mother who takes her out to the park while the father goes to work. Two pictures featuring the parents embracing the child clearly distinguish their gender roles. The mother with the baby is given a medium shot so that readers can see both their faces, and while the child opens her eyes, the mother closes hers as if enjoying her maternal love. The picture in which the father holds the baby is a close-up and only the man's whiskers are shown, foregrounding his masculinity. The last part of the book tells how the child is woken up one night by a wind that resembles what she heard through her orphanage window. Her scream causes the father, rather than the mother, to come in; he kisses her forehead, tucks in her blanket, and makes her feel safe. The father thus personifies the paternal role of saving, protecting, and providing for Chinese orphans.

The single mother in *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* both complicates and conforms to the middle-class gender roles set by U.S. mainstream society. The book portrays the adoptive mother as the head of her household, suggesting that an independent woman can provide a comfortable life for the baby without a man as the breadwinner. However, the book situates her only within this household, presenting her domestic role as a care-giver and loving mother by showing how she nurtures and embraces the baby, but not providing any portrayals of her role as the breadwinner, in accordance with the dominant gender ideology. The two books together construct clear-cut gender roles for adoptive parents.

Adoption as a Love Story

In the two books, rescuing Chinese babies is depicted as an act of love, and the heterosexual romance in classic fairy tales changes into the love story between the adoptive parent(s) and the child. *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* is a case in point. After meeting the baby, the mother "was so happy that I cried the moment I took you in my arms, …you cried, too" (7). This spread is illustrated with the white mother embracing the baby, they facing each other, and both with tears in their eyes, indicating that the long-separated pair of mother and daughter finally reunite. Murmuring "I had been waiting for you my whole life," the adoptive mother expresses how she and the child are made for each other (7). The next spread is illustrated with only the baby sitting up and chewing her finger, but the verbal text tells much more. Joining the readers and gazing upon the baby with loving eyes, the mother now whispers sweet words commonly heard between lovers, "When you look[ed] at me with those big brown eyes, I [knew] we belonged together… 'I love you like crazy cakes.' I whispered" (10). The fairytale mother-daughter romance the book depicts thus fits into the convention Propp describes as "the female ideal match[ing] the ideal of the male hero."[21]

However, unlike heterosexual romance that emphasizes reciprocal love between the hero and the heroine, *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* foregrounds how deeply the adoptive mother loves the baby, since the baby is too little to give any response. Given the absence of a Chinese birth mother as a caregiver in the book, the adoptive mother, through this unilateral love, personifies the United States as the provider of a comfortable, cozy permanent home and the loving caregiver for the forsaken Chinese baby. One picture shows the adoptive mother bending down to kiss the sleeping child's little hand, and another paints the baby falling into sound sleep on the mother's chest. The mother's loving care is particularly demonstrated in one spread in which she holds the baby who quietly drinks milk in her arms. The mother, wearing a nice blue night-robe and seated in a light green armchair, opens her mouth while looking at the baby attentively, as if

[21] Propp, *Russian Folklore*, 162.

whispering sweet words to her. Her yellow fluffy slippers are set on a light green rug dotted with dark green leaves and red flowers. Around her feet are scattered the baby's numerous toys and dolls. On the left side of her armchair, a table lamp is emitting warm, yellow light, and on the table beside the lamp stand several picture frames and a small vase with a red rose. The comfortable surroundings paint a homey picture of an American middle-class family in which the mother is lavishing love and care upon her adopted baby.

By constructing adoption as a love story, the books represent adoption from China as a universalized story of humanity. In this process, the unequal economic and political power relations between the United States as the receiving country and China as the sending country of babies is obscured. Similarly, representing adoption as a love story and common human experience erases any trace of the commodification process as well as the unequal economic power relations the adoptive parents hold in relation to the babies' birth parents.

Adoption as a "From Rags to Riches" Story

These fairytale adoption narratives also tell a "from rags to riches" story. In both books, the relinquished baby suddenly turns into the beloved child in the comfortable U.S. middle-class family. However, unlike the conventional "from rags to riches" story in which the hero or heroine has to work hard to succeed, the adopted child acquires riches not by her own efforts, but through adoption by affluent American people. One feature of the "from rags to riches" narrative is that it obscures and justifies the institutionalized inequalities of race, gender, ethnicity, or other kinds, but highlights the overcoming of class barriers. The adoption fairy tales fit into this narrative in that it emphasizes the orphaned baby's transformation from rags to riches and downplays racial and cultural differences between her and her adoptive parents.

One way in which the books minimize race or racial differences between the white adoptive parent(s) and the Chinese baby is illustrating them as similar in physical appearance although race means far more than physical appearance. The babies in both books have the same skin color as the adoptive parents, and the only difference between them is the hair color, which,

as Marcarena Gonzalez and Elizabeth Wesseling suggest, is common in any family, whether the child is adopted or biological.[22] In some pages, illustrators strategically remove even differences in hair and eye color. In one picture in *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey*, in which the adoptive mother embraces the baby, the baby's eyes are painted as dark, but the mother, whose eyes are conceivably non-black, has hers closed. Similarly, in *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, among six spreads that illustrate the blond-haired adoptive mother and the baby together, three show the baby wearing a hat covering her black hair.

Another way to erase any trace of racial difference is the removal of the birth family, which is fully demonstrated in *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*. The birth mother is mentioned once on the last page by the adoptive-mother narrator, who says that "I hope somehow she knew you (the child) were safe and happy in the world" (25). The illustration on this page shows the baby sleeping soundly while being closely held by the adoptive mother, implying that only by her adoption into the American family could the baby enjoy a "safe and happy" life. More importantly, while the verbal text recognizes the birth mother's existence, the illustration completely removes her and highlights that the baby only belongs to the adoptive mother. *An Mei's Strange and Wondrous Journey* shows two pictures of the birth mother, but she is portrayed as having the same color as both An Mei and her adoptive parents. Therefore, her appearance in the book does not undercut the effect of removing racial differences between the child and her adoptive parents that the book tries to achieve.

Such treatments reflect the trend among many adoptive parents to avoid talking about or admitting the racial difference existing between them and their adopted children. It might be argued that the children's picture books are written for younger adoptees who are not yet ready to think about issues such as race. I contend, however, that such avoidance reflects the racial anxieties these parents hold towards their adopted children. Dorow, for example, finds in her research that for white families, especially those celebrating cultural plurality, "the fun fare of

[22] Marcarena Garcia Gonzalez and Elisabeth Wesseling, "The Stories We Adopt By: Tracing 'The Red Thread' in Contemporary Adoption Narratives," *The Lion and Unicorn* 37, no. 3 (September 2013): 267.

Chinese culture sometimes became a way to deflect the haunting of racial formations."[23] As C.N. Le has also observed, many adoptive parents worry that acknowledging racial differences might hinder their adopted child from integrating into their white families and community.[24]

Such downplay of racial differences in these books also reveals the ideology of color-blindness through which many adoptive parents view towards their adopted children. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva observes that the majority of white people claim that they "don't see any color, just people," and that race or racial discrimination is "no longer the central factor determining minorities' life chances." These claims, according to her, are part of the ideology of color-blindness, or what she calls color-blind racism, which functions to justify that "contemporary racial inequality [is] the outcome of nonracial dynamics." The color-blind ideology thus works for "a covert and institutionalized" racial system and maintains "white privilege without fanfare."[25] Helen A. Neville et al characterize two types of interrelated domains in the ideology: "color-evasion"—emphasizing sameness and denying racial differences; "power-evasion"—emphasizing equal opportunities and denying the existence of racism.[26] Current research shows that adoptive parents of Chinese children hold color-blind attitude towards race issues their children might encounter. For instance, citing a Chinese American's observation in a meeting organized by FCC (Families with Children from China), Dorow laments that some white parents were more interested in Chinese food and dance than inviting a speaker on the history of discrimination against Asians in America. According to her, this phenomenon of culture substituting for race, or what she calls the "race-culture matching" among white adoptive parents, directly speaks to "racial projects" that have been undertaken in the United States, such as "assimilation, color-blindness, and multiculturalism."[27]

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[23] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 240.
[24] C.N. Le, "Adopted Asian Americans," in *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, ed. Xiaojian Zhao and Edward JW Park (ABC-CLIO, 2013), 67.
[25] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanhan, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 1-3.
[26] Helen A. Neville, "Color-Blind Racial Ideology: Theory, Training, and Measurement Implications in Psychology," *American Psychologist* 68, no. 6, (September 2013): 455.
[27] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 240, 235.

The color-blind approach often brings secondary results, the most important of which, I argue, is that many adoptive parents often refuse to consider their adopted children as immigrants. According to C. N. Le, one of the secondary results is adoptive parents' treating the adopted children as "honorary whites," so ignoring racial differences is actually "reinforcing whiteness." The other is conflating the children's identity as Asian Americans with Asians, so adoptive parents are often engaged in exposing their children to Asian culture by bringing them to Asian language classes and cultural events, but have no interest in educating their children about "Asian American issues."[28] I argue, however, that these white adoptive parents, rather than conflating the children's identity as Asian Americans with Asians, draw a clear line between Asian immigrants and Asians, and that they are more willing to have their children connected with Asian cultural roots but avoid labeling them as Asian immigrants, thus leaving racism that both their adopted children and conventional Asian immigrants have to face unattended.

Refusing to consider their adopted children as immigrants is common among adoptive parents, so much so that one adoptee protests online that "I really am an immigrant."[29] Behind such refusal is the ideological meanings attached to the concepts of "immigrants" and "adoptees." In other words, immigrants and adoptees are positioned in the dichotomy of unassimilable/assimilable and exclusive/inclusive. Immigrants in the United States—especially Asian ones—have been commonly considered as undesirable and unassimilable outsiders but adoptees, especially those adopted into white families, are considered as assimilable members of white families and of the U.S. national body, or what Le calls as "honorary whites."[30] It might be argued that some adoptive parents might be uninterested in or know little about the history of Asian immigration and thus are oblivious to the fact that Asian immigrants have been treated as

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[28] Le, "Adopted Asian Americans," 67-68.
[29] "Voices of Adoptees: I really Am An Immigrants," *Adopted,* accessed December 26, 2016, http://www.adoptedthemovie.com/voices-of-adoptees-i-really-am-an-immigrant/
[30] George J. Borjas. *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy*. (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 4-6. Theresa Catalano also found, through her analysis of online newspapers recounting crimes committed by Latino immigrants, that anti-immigrant ideology is striking in U.S. crime reports. See Theresa Catalano, "Anti-Immigrant Ideology in U.S. Crime Reports: Effects on the Education of Latino Children," *Journal of Latino and Education* 12, no. 4 (2013): 254-270.

unassimilable outsiders. However, as Mae M. Ngai argues, for over a century, the United States has been constructing —through the whole series of immigration acts, U.S. census, and national quota system—"a white nation descended from Europe" in which non-white, foreign born immigrants are racialized as unassimilable aliens.[31] This construction of white America, I argue, has profoundly influenced how white people look at non-white immigrants and has also led to many adoptive parents' reluctance to characterize their adopted children as immigrants. Such a reluctant attitude blinds adoptive parents and prevents them from seeing that like conventional immigrants, their adopted children suffer from racism on a daily basis, as my analysis on adult adoptee blog narratives shows in Chapter Seven.

While race is downplayed, these books highlight the overcoming of class barrier between the child and the adoptive parents to overshadow their racial, cultural, and national differences. For instance, in *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, the middle-class adoptive mother provides abundantly for the baby's new life: a room and a new crib, high-quality and perfectly fit clothes, toys, stuffed animals, flowers, cards, balloons, presents from neighbors, and more importantly, a comfortable, cozy, middle-class permanent home. As Gonzalez and Weselling observe, fairy tales as a genre tend to focus on rags-to-riches scenarios and to compress other social categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality into the matter of class.[32] Such emphasis on the overcoming of class barriers not only reflects the dominant narrative of rescue in Western media, but also, like the downplay of racial differences, further reveals anxieties among white adoptive parents that their children are racially different from them and that these differences might delegitimize their parenthood. In other words, for white adoptive parents, foregrounding the children's class transformation highlights their economic capital and privilege that can be used to make up for the racial differences between them and their adopted children. The narrative of "from rags to riches" in adoption fairy tales, therefore, serves as an effective instrument to remove adoptive parents' racial anxieties.

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[31] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 27.
[32] Gonzalez and Weselling, "The Stories We Adopted By," 265.

White Adoptive Mothers' Imagination of the Birth Mother

In 2000, a U.S. adoption agency advertised on its website: "Adopting a Chinese child is very simple. There will be no birth mother knocking on your door. In China, it is a crime to abandon a child. If a birth mother changes her mind and comes back to a welfare home for the child, she will be put in prison."[33] Indeed, compared with domestic adoption and transnational adoption from other countries in which birth parents might suddenly appear to claim their children, Chinese birth parents usually give up their children secretly and seldom reappear in the child's life. However, the birth mothers never disappear in the thoughts of their American counterparts: "What does my daughter's birth mother look like?" "What would she do if she were here?" "What am I going to tell my daughter about her birth mother?" "How would my child react if she appeared?" Even if some adoptive parents avoid talking about the birth mothers and try to naturalize their relationship with their adopted children through narratives such as "the right match," they will have to face difficult moments when the adoptees ask questions about their birth parents as they grow older.

Two books, Carol Antoinette Peacock's picture book *Mommy Far, Mommy Near* (illustrated by Shawn Costello Brownell) and Karin Evans's adoption memoir *The Lost Daughters of China,* give much attention to the birth mother. By analyzing the two books, I aim to explore how they imagine the birth mother in racialized, gendered, and classed lens. The two books vary in both genre and audience. Like the two picture books discussed above, *Mommy Far, Mommy Near* primarily targets young adoptee children as a bedside story that can be read by adoptees and their adoptive parents together. As Gonzalez and Wesseling have stated, children's picture books about adoption are increasingly needed by adoptive parents because these books "anticipate the painful and awkward questions that adoptees are bound to ask sooner or later."[34] In this sense, this book functions to anticipate "the painful and awkward questions" involved in

[33] This example was cited from Dorow's *Transnational Adoption*, 60.
[34] Gonzalez and Wesseling, "The Stories We Adopt By," 258.

transnational adoption, such as racial difference, the birth parents, and why the child was abandoned by the birth parents. *The Lost Daughters of China*, on the other hand, is a memoir written for adult readers, especially prospective/adoptive parents and those who are concerned with Chinese orphans.

Nevertheless, the two books share a number of similarities. Both are written by white adoptive mothers and both contain rich imagination of the birth mother. In both books, the birth mother is portrayed as a loving mother but a tragic woman who is silent, passive, and left with no choice but to give up her daughter. In Dorow's words, the birth mother is imagined as "both [a] victim and [a] heroine who did the best thing for [the] child in difficult circumstances."[35] Both books also represent her as the collaborator in adoption: the former portrays her as being present in the adoption process, and the latter imagines her as hoping her child to be adopted by Americans. Through imagination of the birth mother, both books construct the United States as the benevolent rescuer of and permanent home provider for her abandoned baby in contrast with China as a perpetually dark, patriarchal country.

Mommy Far, Mommy Near

Like the two picture books discussed above, *Mommy Far, Mommy Near* is another widely accepted picture book on adoption from China. The book was written and edited by Carol Antoinette Peacock, a psychologist who specializes in family and adoption issues and author of several books, and illustrated by Shawn Costello Brownell, an art teacher. Published by Albert Whitman & Company, a children's book publishing house founded in 1919, it has been widely circulated among prospective/adoptive parents and won two awards, the Notable Social Trade Books for Young People of 2001 and the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold Seal Award.[36] Besides this book, Peacock has also published several other books, such as *Sugar Was My Best Food: Diabetes and Me* (1998), *Death and Dying* (2004), and *Pilgrim Cat* (2014). In 2012, Peacock

[35] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 184.
[36] "Carol Antoinette Peacock," accessed December 8, 2016, http://carolpeacock.com/mommy-far-mommy-near.php.

published a youth fiction based on adoption from China, *Red Thread Sisters*. *Mommy Far, Mommy Near* uses Peacock's family members, including her two adopted daughters, Elizabeth and Catherine, and the dog Penny, as prototypes and characters. For the illustration of the book, Peacock worked closely with Brownell. According to Peacock, Brownell even stayed with Peacock and her family for one week, built up intimate connection with the adoptees, and took photos that later served as "models for her beautiful illustration."[37]

Although most characters are based on Peacock's family members, the central character is the imagined Chinese birth mother. In her interview, Peacock states that the book was created to fill the gap in the existing children's books about adoption: according to her, these books often pay more attention to the birth parents' feelings, including sadness at abandoning the children and hope for a better future for them, or the adoptive parents' feelings, such as joy at adopting the children, but neglects adoptees' feelings concerning their adoption, especially about having two mothers.[38] To this end, Peacock centers upon how the adoptee feels about and deals with the difficult issue of facing her birth mother.

The book portrays the birth mother through the imagination of the older adoptee, Elizabeth. When her adoptive mother tells her that she had another mother in China who grew her in her tummy, she starts to imagine her birth mother, who is first envisioned as invisible but loving and caring about her from afar. By playing with a toy telephone, Elizabeth often imagines that her birth mother calls and asks about her. She tells her birth mother on the phone how she has been loved by everyone in her American family: her adoptive father walks with her in the rain; her adoptive mother helps her string necklaces out of colorful beads; and her sister blows bubbles with her. The illustration of the doublespread echoes the verbal text by showing them doing exactly those things. It is interesting that the way she is loved is represented as every family member accompanying and playing with her, since this is what Elizabeth, as a child,

[37] "Author's Corner," accessed December 8, 2016, http://www.asiaforkids.com/resources/authorscorner/carolp.tpl?cart=14768439161217073.
[38] Allison Martin, "Helping Families Discuss Adoption: An Interview with Carol Peacock," accessed December 8, 2016, http://www.comeunity.com/adoption/mommyfar.html.

perceives as love, but it also reveals that her middle-class American family has capital and free time to be her playmates, which further indicates their leisurely, middle-class lifestyle.

However, soon Elizabeth becomes less convinced that her birth mother loves her because she cannot understand why her birth mother could not keep her if she "loved me so much" (14). While the birth mother has remained invisible except through the toy phone, now as the adoptive mother explains to Elizabeth why her birth mother had to give her up, the anonymous Chinese woman is first pictured as a saddened woman with eyes swollen from crying too much, who looks attentively and lovingly at the sleeping, bundled Elizabeth. The adoptive mother told Elizabeth that she was relinquished because China made a rule— one family could only have one child—and that another baby was born before her in the family. She also depicts the birth mother as a loving and heroic figure who did "the best thing she could" by bundling baby Elizabeth up snugly and leaving her where she could be found (14). The verbal text and the illustration of the sorrowful Chinese woman with swollen eyes work together to depict the birth mother not only as a victim of China's birth-planning policy, but as a heroine who had to forsake her beloved daughter to give her a better life.[39]

The next doublespread contains the adoptive mother's verbal explanation of the adoption process on the verso page and Elizabeth's visual imagination of the process on the recto that illustrates the birth mother as a saddened and silent collaborator of the adoption. The birth mother is portrayed here as being present in the same room and witnessing how the adoptive parents happily embrace baby Elizabeth. "I was so happy. I cried and cried. Daddy and I held you very tight," the adoptive mother describes the scene of the adoption (16). The recto page complements the description with the illustration of a joyful white couple holding a baby girl in the room. But the picture tells more: while the verbal text mentions nothing about the birth

[39] The heroine-victim narrative of Chinese birth mothers echoes a long-standing representational convention in U.S. popular culture, as commonly seen in some Weepies' melodramas in the 1930s and 1940s, such as *Stella Dallas* (1937). However, the heroine-victim image of Chinese birth mothers complicates the narrative in the U.S. melodramas in that Chinese women are depicted as being forced to forego their children due to the relentless implementation of the institutionalized birth-planning policy, as I have argued in Chapter Four.

mother, the illustration vividly captures her being present as a sorrowful Chinese country woman standing still and silently at the door with a saddened face. The white couple wears comfortable, casual clothes, and the adoptive father wears a pair of glasses which makes him look like a scholar, but the Chinese woman is portrayed as wearing bigger-sized loose trousers and a pair of home-made cloth shoes, and her shirt sleeves roll up to her elbows, signifying her status as a poor, rural laborer. The white couple fixes its loving eyes upon the baby, but the Chinese country woman gazes not on the adoption scene or the baby, but down on the floor, as if she feels ashamed and tries to avoid facing the moment in which her baby is transferred to the more affluent white couple but she can do nothing except to acquiesce to what is happening. The contrast of their focuses reveals that while the white couple has the privilege to confidently and happily claim the baby as their own, the birth mother has to relinquish her.

The juxtaposition of the white adoptive parents and the Chinese birth mother thus transmits classed, gendered, and raced message about transnational adoption from China and the power relations between them. The picture shows a Chinese passport and a set of airline tickets at the bottom, and above the heads of the newly made family, an airplane, signifying that the child as a Chinese citizen is being adopted and will fly to the United States with her new middle-class white parents. The white couple who embrace the baby together and the single Chinese woman who forsakes her also portray the United States as a family-based, loving home provider, and China as a family-less and patriarchal country where women have to struggle with the forced abandonment alone.

Adopted transnationally, most adoptees never have opportunities to find their birth mothers, and it is unlikely that the birth mothers will reappear in their lives, since they usually gave up their children secretly because it is illegal to relinquish babies in China, and most would not have the economic and cultural capital to fly to the United States to claim their children back. However, Peacock provides such a possibility by creating a scene in which Elizabeth suddenly

comes across a Chinese woman and a Chinese girl of her age in the playground whose appearances seem to bring Elizabeth's imagined birth mother to life.

Although appearing in the United States, the Chinese woman is still portrayed as an uneducated country laborer with bound feet. The woman is illustrated as wearing coarse cotton clothes, her sleeves rolled up, and a pair of black home-made shoes on her pointed, bound feet. This is a typical image of a victimized Chinese woman seen through what Mohanty calls "the Western eye."[40] In Chinese history, the foot-binding custom, originated in the Southern Tang Dynasty (961-975AD), was first implemented upon women at the top of the social hierarchy as a symbol of leisurely class status and freedom from physical labor. It later spread to lower middle-class women, but laboring women and household maidens normally had unbound feet since they had to undertake physical labor. The practice was prohibited in 1911 when the last dynasty was overthrown. However, bound feet have long been considered in Western culture and academia as the epitome of Chinese women's subjugation and victimization, so much so that in the book published in 2000, Peacock and Brownell still portray the birth mother by using the stereotypical bound-feet image.[41]

The scene in which Elizabeth accidentally encounters the Chinese woman and her daughter puts the three of the same ethnicity together, yet their different classes in the illustration distinguish Elizabeth clearly from them, indicating once again that the adoptee's racial disadvantage can be overcome by her adoptive parents' class privilege. The verbal text here tells that the scene occurs when Elizabeth and her adoptive mother are both on the playground, but the latter is not seen, and Elizabeth, sitting on the top of a slide, is left alone to meet the Chinese mother-daughter pair. Thus the whole spread displays three Chinese people: the close-up of Elizabeth on the left top and the smaller figures of the woman and her daughter on the lower right side. Such a contrast in size and position counteracts commonalities they share in the color

[40] Mohanty, "Under the Western Eyes," 255.
[41] For instance, Susan Greenhalgh, in her article "Bound Feet, Hobbled Lives: Women in Old China" comments that "the most brutal symbol of subjugation of Chinese women was the bound foot." See Greenhalgh, "Bound Feet, Hobbled Lives: Women in Old China" in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 7.

of hair, skin, and eyes. More importantly, while Elizabeth looks well-dressed, with neatly cut hair, casual clothes, and a pair of white sandals, the woman and her daughter have messy hair, and their clothes look old, coarse, and dirty, indicating that if their shared ethnicity cannot set them apart, their different classes do.

Elizabeth's encounter with the woman immediately reminds her of her birth mother, but the latter's response contradicts sharply with her imagined birth mother. The verbal text narrates that Elizabeth identifies with the woman by convincing herself that "she must be a Chinese mother. My other mommy would look just like her," but the woman, as the illustration shows, does not even look at Elizabeth (13). While Elizabeth politely waves her hand at them, the other two bow their heads and fix their eyes on the ground, as if they dare not look straight ahead or at the girl on the slide who apparently comes from a richer family (13).

Seeing Elizabeth badly hurt by her encounter with the woman, as if she has been abandoned once again, her adoptive mother appears to save her from the cruel situation and carries her home. The next page is illustrated with two mother and daughter pairs, walking away from each other, the Chinese country woman contrasting the white middle-class adoptive mother wearing a green sweater and casual white pants. In the omniscient perspective, the Chinese pair turns smaller and farther, but the image of the white mother holding Elizabeth becomes bigger and closer to the reader. Although imagining the adopted child encountering her birth mother might have exposed the vulnerability of motherhood based on adoption, contrasting the two pairs of mother and daughter foregrounds the adoptive mother's racial and class privileges and perpetuates the racialized image of Chinese women as poor and victimized.

Elizabeth's pain from her encounter with the woman is soon cured by her adoptive mother, indicating once again that the racially and economically privileged adoptive mother personifies the loving and caring U.S. nation. In the next doublespread, the verbal text narrates how what happened on the playground hurt Elizabeth. She tells her adoptive mother, "my mommy is lost…. She didn't keep me." Her adoptive mother reassures her: "That mommy loved you,

Elizabeth. And I love you. And Daddy loves you. And Katherine (younger adoptee sister) loves you. And Penny (the dog) loves you" (24). The adoptive mother is then illustrated as sitting on the bed, holding Elizabeth and comforting her. Hearing these words, Elizabeth imagines herself at the center of all who love her: a smiling white father, a sweet Chinese sister, a hugging white mother, a snuggling dog, and a sad "that mommy." Her sorrowful Chinese mother is placed far from her among flower petals that signify her distance from Elizabeth both temporally and spatially, but her adoptive mother puts Elizabeth on her lap, hugging and kissing her. This picture thus demonstrates that motherhood is closely related to race and class: the birth mother gave birth to her, but the one who has the right to claim her is the white, middle-class adoptive mother. Such a striking contrast denaturalizes motherhood based on blood ties and rationalizes that based on choice made by those who have racial privilege and economic capital.

While in all these illustrations the birth mother is portrayed as a grieved and powerless woman who has to abandon her child for adoption by the American adoptive parents, another image pictures her as a happy, free-willed collaborator of adoption. To strengthen the mother-daughter relationship made of adoption, Elizabeth's adoptive mother often plays with her the "adopt game" by affirming that "You are my child. You are my own. I love you forever. I adopt you now" (16). These words give Elizabeth a message that she was born to be adopted by *this* white mother. After being assured that she was/is loved and wanted by both her birth mother and her American family, Elizabeth now offers to play the adopt game with her adoptive mother again. The verbal text in this doublespread contains only the game, but the illustration tells much more. Elizabeth and her adoptive mother are portrayed as holding each other, looking into each other's eyes. Beside them, the image of the birth mother is illustrated by a device called "simultaneous succession," a device widely utilized in the European medieval art, which means "a sequence, most often of a figure, depicting moments that are disjunctive in time but perceived as belonging together, in an unequivocal order."[42] In the illustration, different stages of her birth

[42] Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott, *How Picturebooks Work* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2001), 140.

mother's life—as a country-girl student, a labor worker sweeping the floor, a bride, and a mother holding the newly born Elizabeth, are displayed in a sequence. While the student and the bride both look smilingly at the birth mother holding the baby Elizabeth, the birth mother and the baby look trustingly and point at the adoptive mother and bigger Elizabeth (who are playing the adopt game now), with smiles on their faces. The happy birth mother seems to be speaking to the same happy baby Elizabeth, "See, that is your adoptive mother. She will give you a happier life." Through such illustration the birth mother is imagined not as a tragic victim who was forced to abandon her baby, but as a happy young mother who willingly chooses to place her baby into the hand of the white adoptive mother to guarantee a better life for her. The portrayal of a happy collaborator birth mother, therefore, convinces adoptee readers that they were not abandoned but transferred from the birth mother to the adoptive mother out of love, and that America is the place in which they can be offered a happy life. The device of simultaneous succession here also functions to show young adoptee readers that all stages of the birth mother's life are meant for the moment when the baby can be adopted by her white adoptive mother. Adoption is thus legitimized and justified by making the birth mother, even from her early student age, a collaborator.

The Lost Daughters of China

Compared with *Mommy Far, Mommy Near*, the birth mother in Karin Evans' memoir *The Lost Daughters of China* is more grieved and more heroic, and her collaboration in adoption is more tragic and heartrending. Also unlike *Mommy Far, Mommy Near*, this book shifts the social context of the birth mother from the United States to China, which Evans depicts, with a heavy heart, a sorrowful tone, and startling ethnographic details, as a dark, ahistorical, patriarchal society in which women are oppressed and female babies are abandoned and lost.

The book, which became a national bestseller, was written right after the Western media's condemnation in 1995 and 1996 against the Chinese government and state-run orphanages. In 1997, Evans went to China to adopt her daughter, Kelly, and started to write the book which was

published in 2000. The period during which she was undergoing the adoption process and writing the book was also a time when adoption from China was in full swing, and China was accused of abusing female orphans and forcing women to sterilize or abort or abandon their baby daughters. Meanwhile, a large number of prospective adoptive parents, fearing that China would close its door to transnational adoption, raised dissenting voices to challenge the condemnations made by the Western mainstream media, and/or to express their sympathy and support to China.

Under such circumstances, Evans, as both a journalist and adoptive mother, tries to achieve a delicate balance in her narrative. This book interweaves the process through which Evans adopted her daughter Kelly with her depiction of Chinese society and culture as related to transnational adoption, and is often treated as an invaluable guide for prospective adoptive parents and a secondary source for scholars.[43] Evans's discussion of Chinese culture and society includes the birth-planning policy, the miserable situations she believes birth mothers have experienced in abandoning their babies, and the larger social and historical context. One of the reviewers of the book, Mary Pipher, comments that Evans has given a "balanced account of the extraordinarily complex issues involving the lost daughters of China," and that she "is respectful of the Chinese, of adoptive parents, and the rights of women."[44]

However, throughout the book, Evans's "respect" for Chinese women and "lost daughters" and her advocacy for their rights reflect her perspective as what Mohanty labels a First World "feminist as international consumer" in China's adoption market.[45] In this perspective, the First World/One-Third world feminist makes "brief forays" into Chinese culture, which adds to the existing narrative, but the monolithic image of Chinese women, represented by the birth mother, remains unchanged. On the one hand, Evans has been deeply influenced by Western media representations of China, and she cites them multiple times to support her advocacy for Chinese

[43] For instance, both Toby Alice Volkman and Sara A. Dorow cite from Evans' memoir when they discuss the origin stories of baby abandonment in China. See Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 178 and Volkman, *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, 101-102.
[44] Evans, *The Lost Daughters of China*, back cover.
[45] Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," 518.

women and female children. On the other hand, she subjectively interprets what she witnessed with regards to Chinese society by highlighting Chinese women and female children's misery while filtering other aspects, such as Chinese men who suffered no less and who might support their wives. Under her interpretation, Chinese birth mothers, and Chinese women in general, have no agency except as adoption collaborators and no choice but to abandon their female babies secretly under the multiple oppressions from the patriarchal family, state, and society, thus creating millions of "lost daughters of China."

Evans's imagination of her adopted daughter's birth mother personifies Chinese women of different walks of life under various levels of oppression. Having no trace of the birth mother but being unable to stop wondering about her, Evans speculates all possible identities in different age spans that might relate to her: a factory worker, a university student, a teenager runner, a rural wife, or a "birth guerilla" (a woman who escapes from the hometown authorities to birth her baby) (85). In these speculations, the women's miserable situations were either caused by the birth-planning policy and its relentless implementation by local authorities or factory management, as the factory worker or the rural woman might encounter, or afflicted by oppression of their face-conscious families and discrimination from the patriarchal society, as might happen to the university student or the teenage runner. Evans thus paints a dark picture in which Chinese women, whoever they are, regardless of their age, education, and marital status, are all suffering from multiple layers of oppression at different stages of their lives.

Questions concerning their adopted children's birth and relinquishment haunt many adoptive parents for a long time, and Evans offers a possible answer to these questions by imagining a vivid scene in which Kelly's birth mother is represented as a brave but tragic victim-heroine under the double pressure of the relentless birth-planning policy and patriarchal social norms. In her imagination, Kelly's birth mother was pretty, slim, and much younger than Evans. She secretly gave birth in a girlfriend's place but was forced to move out when the baby was only one month old. Having nowhere to go, no food for herself, no milk for the baby, and having run

out of money, she had to give up the baby by leaving her "near the police station, in the market, in a pile of melons"—where the baby could be easily found (206).

While the other three books discussed above have completely erased traces of the birth father, he is meagerly mentioned in Evans's memoir, but only to highlight how, due to his patriarchal idea of desiring a son over a daughter, the birth mother is left alone to face the miserable situation of giving up the baby. Evans imagines the woman saying, "And the father? He might have come around for a son. But not for this. So I didn't even tell him" (206). Therefore, like Elizabeth's birth mother in *Mommy Far, Mommy Near*, Kelly's birth mother is depicted facing the dire situation all by herself. Evans gives readers an impression that besides oppression from the authorities, the birth mother had to evade even her own husband. Through such constructions, Chinese women are represented as under multiple oppressions of the birth-planning policy, their husbands, and patriarchal society.

The birth mother in Evans's narrative is also a collaborator in her daughter's adoption by Americans. Evans continues to imagine that the birth mother knew there was an orphanage in the city, and sometimes buses came with American parents to get the babies, so she hoped that "someday years from now I will see a young girl get off one of those buses, a young girl who looks like me, and she will come looking. But I know it's just a dream" (207). In Evans's vision, having her abandoned baby adopted by American parents was only a beautiful dream, too good to be true, for the poor birth mother, indicating that only American parents could give her relinquished daughter a better life. Kelly's adoption is thus legitimized through imagined consent from the birth mother.

Evans also gives a real example of an adoption collaborator by depicting an unknown woman who tried to thrust a baby into her hands. Evans came across the woman in the evening of her second day in China. The young woman stopped Evans and thrust a silk bundle into her arms while saying something rapidly and loudly in Cantonese, a dialect that Evans could not understand, while pointing at the bundle. Unable to know her intention and afraid of getting into

trouble, Evans refused her firmly, but the woman was getting "more insistent": the more Evans tried to get past, "the more desperate and aggressive" the woman became (64). Afterwards Evans kept wondering whether the woman intended to give her a baby. "Was she a young mother trying to get her child to safety by literally putting her in the hands of a foreigner?," Evans asks in the book (67). This question implies that Evans assumes the woman believed the child would be safe if put in the hands of "a foreigner." Starting from the mid-nineteenth century when China was invaded and semi-colonized by world powers, predominantly from the West, the word "foreigner" in China has been primarily equated with a white Westerner. It can be assumed that Evans is familiar with the equation since, as her memoir shows, she had been living among Chinese people in Hong Kong for years. In the 1990s, this equation was further reinforced by the striking phenomenon of white Westerners coming to adopt Chinese orphans. In this account, Evans thus depicts this woman as another collaborator in the adoption of Chinese babies by Westerners. Hinted in the narrative of adoption collaborator is the assumption that these desperate birth mothers view Western countries as the only safe places for their babies and that only white adoptive parents would provide their babies a secure, comfortable life.

Evans's portrayal of the birth mother as a victim-heroine and adoption collaborator is part of her construction of China as an ahistorical, dark, patriarchal society. She labels China as "a nation of lost daughters," where female babies are found everywhere and every day— "babies wrapped in newspapers, babies bundled in rags, babies in baskets, babies in boxes," and where there is an "epidemic" of abandonment (18-19). In this narrative, China treats female babies not as human beings, but as lifeless and valueless objects that can be discarded every day and anywhere. Evans recalls that when asked why she chose to adopt from China, she replied, "Because a little girl is waiting for us there," and in contemplation, she feels such a "lighthearted answer" inevitably led to "a more weighty inquiry"—what about "all the lost, waiting girls?," implying that China is a country full of baby girls waiting to be picked up for adoption (18). In this nation of lost girls, according to Evans, those who were found and sent to orphanages "were

just the tip of the iceberg," suggesting that millions of other Chinese baby girls were simply lost (117).

Compared with lost female babies, Evans is more engaged in advocating for Chinese women who, according to her, have long been suffering from the deep-rooted, persistent patriarchy of Chinese society. She cites multiple sources, including thoughts of ancient Chinese philosophers such as Confucius and Mencius, Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, and other writings, to support her statement that in such a systematically patriarchal society, discrimination against women and female children is deeply entrenched (91-92). However, her main interest seems to lie in how patriarchy persists in contemporary China. She keeps using phrases like "even today," "in the 1990s," and the present tense when she describes how women are discriminated against in China (92). She also gives exceptions, such as the legendary heroine Fa Mu Lan and the women in Chinese scholar Hu Shih's writings in the 1930s and the official attempts to improve women's status in Mao's era. However, she still maintains that "the patriarchy [in China] had a long and pervasive force of its own," and that women's status has not changed much (96).

In her narrative, patriarchy is prevalent not only on the societal level but also on the familial and governmental levels. Situating Chinese women in their patriarchal families, Evans once again weaves the past with the present and demonstrates the consistency of women's treatment in their husbands' families. In her view, once married, women in China historically were treated not better than household slaves by their mothers-in-law and were required to reproduce a male heir as "the intimate and crucial business" of their husbands' families (91). "Even today," Evans claims, harsh treatment from their husbands' families remains the same (92). The Chinese state is also represented as having a "long arm" that reaches into a woman's bedroom and reproductive life: A woman needs permission from the government for conception, without which she has to face forced abortion and sterilization and have her womb continuously monitored(107).

The governmental intrusion that Evans describes was largely true for many women in the 1980s and 1990s, but she highlights women as "the focus of enforcement, oversight, and punishment," without mentioning that usually both husband and wife faced the hardships together (106). For instance, both could be sterilized. By emphasizing only women as oppressed and categorizing their husbands as the co-oppressors of the state, Evans represents Chinese women as the lone bearers of hardships and helpless victims in the quagmire of patriarchy. In this sense, this book reflects First World feminist concerns about and advocacy for Chinese women. Scholars have long been critiquing the trend of Third World women's victimization by First World women.[46] Jinhua Emma Teng observes that since the 1970s, Chinese women in Western literature have been generally characterized by victimization, "a condition seen to be universal and timeless for Chinese women." She critiques that assumptions about Chinese women are based on an essentialist connection between "women" and "China," and there is little consideration of differences in time, age, class, region, ethnicity, or age.[47] The image of the victimized Chinese women in Evans's narrative typifies what Teng has critiqued.

Evans also puts the birth-planning policy into her narrative of China's patriarchy. She notes the change in the policy from what the Western media describes as the static "one-child policy" to the revised "more-than-one-child policy" in the mid-1980s. But she continues to comment that the revision gave "a nod of official approval" to the age-old bias that boys are so important that families with girls deserve another chance to have a son (117). She cites American anthropologist Susan Greenhalgh to show the lament among Western feminists that it is hard to find anyone, not even feminists in China, who openly criticizes the birth-planning policy. "This

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[46] Joan Wallach Scott contends that whenever Iranian theocracy is mentioned, emphasis is always placed on "the plight of women in head scarves, veils and burqas," which becomes the "quintessential sign of backwardness." See Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 92. Melani McAlister also argues that in American cultural representations, the political nature of Islam "creates a particular gender ideology, which insists that women are limited to the private sphere, the servants of men." See McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 230. Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol have made similar contentions concerning images of Afghan women in American cultural texts such as *National Geographic,* which convey the rhetoric of rescue and politics of pity, and signify the role of the United States as a liberator out of its "goodwill and charity." See Hesford and Kozol, *Just Advocacy?*: *Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminism, and Politics of Representation* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 4.

[47] Jinhua Emma Teng, "The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Women' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review," *Signs* 22, no. 1 (Autumn, 1996): 115-151.

is very troubling for me as a Western feminist," says Greenhalgh, "you have to understand, on life-and-death matters, it is not a good time to be female in China" (120). It is not surprising that U.S. feminists paid attention to the population control policy of China or other Third World countries. Anti-imperialist and transnational feminists have long argued that U.S. colonialism and empire-building are enforced through population control directed at Third World women, whose reproduction and sexuality are viewed as the cause of overpopulation and poverty, and that such blame masks the deeper U.S. capitalist exploitation and provides an excuse for further U.S. intervention.[48] What is striking is Evans' selectiveness in her representation of Chinese people's reactions toward the policy —presuming that it was the deeply-rooted patriarchy that led to wide support of the birth-planning policy among Chinese people—without considering other factors, such as the role the Chinese mainstream discourse has played into the wide acceptance of the policy.

Evans's outcry over and advocacy for Chinese women fit into Mohanty's critiques of U.S.-based feminism. Mohanty stated in 1986 that the Western feminist discourse lumps Third World women into the same group of ahistorical, passive victims with monolithic and usually reductive images, but leaves invisible "the material complexity, reality, and agency" of these women's bodies and lives.[49] In 2003, she restructured her argument in the context of globalization and pinpointed that some Western feminists have turned into "feminist[s] as international consumer[s]" whose brief understanding of Third World or Two-Third world culture only serves as "supplement" to their existing narrative that portrays these women monolithically.[50] Evans's book fits into both of Mohanty's criticisms. On the one hand, she represents Chinese women as passive, silent victims and deprives them of any agency except as adoption collaborators. On the other, her adoption trip to China—as a consumer in China's adoption market— and journalistic

[48] This is Laura Briggs' argument on her analysis of U.S. imperialism in Puerto Rican. See Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), 74-108.
[49] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 19; "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," 510.
[50] Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited," 514.

inquiry into Chinese culture and society only adds to her preexisting image of Chinese women. In short, in her narrative, Evans portrays Chinese women as perpetually under multiple layers of oppression, including China's capitalism, patriarchal families and society, and the intervening state with its stringent implementation of the birth-planning policy.

Conclusion

U.S. white adoptive parents have dominated narratives of adoption from China, through which they produce knowledge about China and Chinese people as well as the United States and themselves. This knowledge is fully displayed in two types of writings discussed in this chapter—adoption fairy tales and feminist writings. Different as they are in genre and audience, the four books have produced similar discursive and cultural work about adoption from China, in which a binary between the modern, humanitarian, and affluent American and an ahistorical, premodern, patriarchal, feminized China is constructed and ideologies of race, class, gender are produced.

However, Gish Jen's *The Love Wife*, as the next chapter illustrates, tells a completely different adoption narrative. In Jen's humorous and multi-layered narrative style, the post-adoption life is not a fairy tale in which the adoptees live happily ever after with their American adoptive parents; the adoptive mother-daughter relationship is denaturalized; and the Chinese lower-class woman whom the adoptees associate with their birth mother is not a passive victim "under the Western eyes," but appears in the middle-class American adoptive family and exerts her agency in various ways. *The Love Wife* thus exposes how selective and incomplete white adoptive parents' narratives are.

CHAPTER 6

Gish Jen's *The Love Wife:* An Alternative Adoption Narrative

In a scene from Gish Jen's 2004 novel, *The Love Wife,* when teenaged Asian adoptee Lizzy wonders why her "real mother" relinquished her, her white adoptive mother, Blondie, comforts her by saying that "she left you at the church because she loved you and knew she couldn't parent you." This reply is immediately refuted by Lizzy, who claims that Blondie's words are out of "the adoption books" (212). This conversation is particularly significant as the adoptee not only denies that the adoptive mother is her "real mother," but suggests that there exists a standardized adoption narrative from which her adoptive mother draws to talk with her about issues concerning her adoption. Interestingly, the adoptive mother's answer resembles what the protagonist's adoptive mother tells her about her Chinese birth mother in the picture book *Mommy Far, Mommy Near* by Carol Antoinette Peacock, as I have discussed in Chapter Five. By refuting this explanation, the conversation in *The Love Wife* thus provides a different adoption narrative from "the adoption books" constructed by white adoptive parents.

The Love Wife is set in the 1990s when adoption of Chinese orphans into white families became a striking phenomenon in the United States and addresses the issue Catherine Ceniza Choy labels "global family making."[1] Adoptive mother Blondie announces at the very beginning of the novel that their family is "the new American family," "something we made. Something we chose" (1). The characters are members of a middle-class family in a nice suburb of Boston, made up of the thirty nine-year-old Chinese American husband Carnegie Wong, his forty five-year-old Caucasian wife Blondie, fifteen-year-old daughter Lizzy, adopted in the United States but of Asian ancestry, nine-year-old daughter Wendy, adopted from China, and their mixed-race biological toddler son Bailey who looks white. Blondie is a successful department head in a company she helped to found, but Carnegie, despite his namesake, worries about being laid off

[1] Choy, *Global Families*, 66.

from his company. This couple thus unsettles the image of middle-class, white American families not only because of their interracial marriage but also because the older, white wife is the higher-earning breadwinner for the family. Such a new family pattern is further threatened by the arrival of Lan, a nanny and distant relative of the Wongs, a lower-class woman from China, which has just gone through the Cultural Revolution and started to open its doors to the outside world. In Blondie's eyes, Lan was arranged posthumously by Carnegie's mother, Mama Wong, to live with them as Carnegie's "love wife."

This chapter focuses on *The Love Wife* and provides a comparative reading with the conventional adoption narratives discussed in previous chapters. To date, *The Love Wife* is the only fiction written by a Chinese American writer that addresses adoption from China since the 1990s. More importantly, it touches upon post-adoption issues between a white adoptive mother and Asian adoptees as complicated by the adoptive parents' mixed-race marriage, the birth of a biological child, and particularly, the presence of a Chinese woman whose age and ethnicity evoke the Chinese birth mother. This novel thus provides an alternative perspective through which to look into adoption from China, the white adoptive mother, the Third World Chinese woman, as well as motherhood based on transnational/transracial adoption.[2]

One of the features that distinguish this novel from Jen's earlier works and other adoption narratives is her multilayered narrative style—almost every character takes turns to narrate in the first-person voice—which enables each character to take his/her own standpoint and simultaneously exposes his/her own issues. Due to the popularity of Jen's first two novels, *Typical Americans* and *Mona in the Promised Land*, *The Love Wife* is widely circulated in the United States and assigned in some high schools and colleges. Published by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, this book was reviewed by major national newspapers, such as the

[2] Like in Chapter Five, I consider the Chinese woman Lan as a Third World woman because in the late 1980s and 1990s when *The Love Wife* is set, China was still a developing, or a Third World country characterized by Gerald Chaliand as "distorted and highly dependent economies devoted to producing primary products for the developed world and to provide markets for their finished goods; traditional, rural social structures; high population growth; and widespread poverty." See Gerard Chaliand, "Third World: definitions and descriptions," *Third World Traveler* (2002), accessed December 20, 2016, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Third_World/Third_World_Chaliand.html.

Washington Post, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times,* and the *Boston Phoenix*, as well as numerous critics, most of whom have noted its innovative narrative form. Jennifer Ann Ho comments that the novel has the quality of a documentary, as if each family member takes turns to talk in therapy without a therapist or is giving family confessions "to an unnamed audience in an unmarked future."[3] Nancy Chodorow claims that through the multiple voices, Jen helps readers find weakness and strengths in each character and decide which character they like or dislike.[4] In Jen's own words, this novel takes a hybrid form, "somewhere between drama and the novel," through which she gives every character the freedom to speak from his/her own position, because "as an author, I can't take responsibility for everything they say."[56] The hybridity of the narrative form is further strengthened by Jen's blending of direct speeches with indirect discourses by deliberately removing quotation marks and replacing them with en dashes.

In refusing to give the master voice to the white adoptive mother Blondie, this narrative form also departs from conventional adoption narratives in which the white adoptive mother is often the most articulate and/or the only narrator and source of information. Instead, each character not only serves as the narrator and an observer of other members, but is also the subject of comment and observation and is concurred with or challenged by other characters. Blondie, for instance, is often challenged by her adolescent adopted daughter, betrayed jokingly by her husband in their family arguments, and criticized, though privately, by the Chinese nanny, Lan.

The Love Wife covers a wide range of themes, such as the mixed-race American family, racism faced by Chinese immigrants, and the relationship between different generations of immigrants, but more importantly, it challenges and complicates U.S. conventional adoption narratives, especially those produced by white adoptive parents, in various ways. Jen disrupts the fairytale narratives that represent adoption as a story of rescue and of adoptive parents and the

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[3] Jennifer Ann Ho, *Understanding Gish Jen* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 70-71.
[4] Nancy Chodorow, "Defending Gish Jen," *New York Times*, November 14, 2004.
[5] Dale Baben, "Behind the Book, Gish Jen's *The Love Wife*: A Typical American Family," *Library Journal*, (July 2004), 68.
[6] Carole Burns, "Off the Page: Gish Jen," September 30, 2004, accessed December 16, 2016, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46979-2004Sep24.html.

adopted children living happily after, and denaturalizes motherhood—whether adoptive or not, and whether based on the same race/ethnicity or not— as a given and demonstrates that motherhood is a socially constructed concept. Jen also unsettles the victimization of Chinese women in white adoptive parents' narratives by positioning the Third World woman, Lan, in the First World, middle-class adoptive family and giving her agency. In addition, Jen challenges the dichotomy held by many white adoptive parents of conventional immigrants as unassimilable outsiders and adoptees as assimilable members of the family and U.S. national body, as Chapter Five illustrates. However, she also reproduces the perpetuated stereotype of Chinese women as victims in the social context of Communist China as a chaotic, inhumane, and patriarchal nation of orphans, which compromises the novel's effect in challenging conventional adoption narratives.

Demystifying Adoption as a Fairy Tale

Although Jen's focus is on the Wongs' mixed-race family centering upon post-adoption issues, her portrayal of Wendy's adoption from China is particularly worth discussing as it clearly contrasts with the adoption fairytale narratives. Jen's deconstruction of adoption from China as a romanticized fairy tale is achieved by foregrounding the Wongs' own infertility as their most important reason to adopt Wendy, by creating a scene in which the adoptive family, rather than the Chinese orphan, is awkwardly trapped and rescued in China, and by constructing the post-adoption life as one in which the adoptive parents and the adopted children are not living happily ever after.

While the fairytale narratives depict adoption from China as an act of humanitarian rescue, Jen constructs Wendy's adoption in 1990 as a story of an infertile couple desperately turning to the newly opened adoption market in China when other sending countries, such as Uruguay and Romania, were closed (107). In the chapter "Wendy," the Wongs, including Wendy, recall the couple's frustration over infertility before adopting her:

BLONDIE / We tried and tried.

WENDY / Nobody wanted me exactly. Really they wanted their own baby, I was their second choice.

BLONDIE / Not true!

CARNEGIE / Second choice didn't mean second best.

We were stupid. We were tired. Our strategy was to try things. Drugs, procedures, acupuncture. We tried to relax, as if it was possible for two people with jobs and a child and fertility issues to relax. We mediated. Accepted our fate. Got in touch with our anger. Embraced our helplessness. Moved past our disappointment.

Still no Wendy.

How many years did this go on? (105)

As in a therapy session, the Wongs narrate their frustration over trying in vain to have children before deciding to adopt Wendy from China. Wendy considers her adoption the Wongs' second choice, which Carnegie acknowledges. Here "the second choice" means both that Wendy was the second child they chose to adopt, after Lizzy, and that adopting her was the second option left to the Wongs, after their fruitless attempts to have children and years of desperate waiting. As adoption scholars have found, since the 1990s, a vast majority of Western adoptive parents chose to adopt foreign babies due to their own infertility and the dwindling market for domestic adoption.[7] In accord with these findings and unlike the common U.S. adoption narratives which construct adoption as an act of rescuing Chinese orphans, as I have discussed in previous chapters, Jen depicts Wendy's adoption as a solution to solve the Wongs' own problem of infertility.

Jen then deromanticizes the adoption process in various ways. Unlike narratives created by white adoptive parents, which are filled with images of Chinese orphans waiting in Chinese orphanages to be adopted by Western adoptive parents, Jen describes how the Wongs are waiting in China to meet Wendy. The novel does not mention Chinese orphanages or anything about Wendy (or other female babies) before she is presented to the Wongs after their staying for weeks, helplessly trapped in "hot," "noisy" China where "everyone smoke[s]" and where they

[7] This observation can be seen in Laura Briggs and Dorow's research. See Briggs, *Somebody's Children*, 111, 123; Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 37.

have to endure mosquito bites (109). Suddenly, the ten-month old Wendy appears, held by her foster mother, but instead of waiting to meet her white adoptive mother as her "right match," as Rose Lewis depicts in her picture book *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, Wendy bawls desperately in the hands of the Wongs and stops crying every time her foster mother touches her, making Blondie wonder "whether we [are] doing the right thing—if the natural thing [isn't] to leave her with the foster mother. Send money for her support, if we [are] so concerned about her welfare. [Are] we adopting this child for her good or for ours?" (120-121). Here rather than naturalizing Wendy's adoption as a predestined match with her, Blondie doubts whether adoption is morally right since it separates Wendy from her foster mother who apparently make her feel happier and more secure. Blondie's self-questioning of "for her good or for ours?" also invites readers to interrogate whether transnational adoption is really for the child's benefit and whether it is out of adoptive parents' humanitarianism, as U.S. conventional adoption narratives purport.

In stark contrast to the fairytale narrative of rescue, Jen creates a scene in which rather than Wendy being rescued by them, the Wongs are trapped and rescued by the Chinese police. After picking up Wendy, the Wongs leave in a hired, broken car that has no seat belts. When the car hits a peddler, a large group of local Chinese gather and circle them, overturning the car upside down. Blondie narrates the scene in vivid details:

> The car landed on its side, so that Wendy and I were heaped on top of Lizzy, who screamed. Our belongings avalanched down on us; Wendy's head hit the glass. I dropped the bottle. Bodies thumped against the window glass above us—much yelling. We appeared to be at the bottom of a pile of people.
>
> —My arm! Lizzy cried.
>
> Wendy shrieked, her whole body clenched.
>
> —Are you all right? It's all right, it's all right, I cooed at Wendy, trying to right myself.
>
> —You're stepping on my hair! cried Lizzy.
>
> I managed a kind of half crouch, standing on a side window, which cracked but, to my surprise, held. Wendy by a miracle was still on my arm. One of my feet was on the diaper bag; the other on the panda. Was Lizzy hurt? Dampness—Wendy needed a new diaper (128).

Carnegie has exited the car to check the injured peddler before the car was toppled, and Blondie

and the two adopted girls are trapped helplessly inside, on tope of one another. When the police finally arrive to rescue them from the accident and send them to a hotel with a brand-new Toyota van, Blondie, severely shocked, has to lie down on bed, Lizzy's arm is sprained, and Wendy is waiting to be "liberated" from her "distinctly gooey diaper" (129). With her peculiar sense of humor, Jen upends the standard depiction of adoption from China as an act of humanitarian rescue and the white adoptive parents as the saviors of abandoned Chinese orphans as constructed in the narrative of "rescue" commonly seen in U.S. media representations.

The adoption experience in China has tremendous influence on the adopted girls, so much so that it becomes hard for Blondie to make the adoption into a romantic fairy tale. After returning from China, Blondie tries to store some good memories of their China trip by creating a photo album with Lizzy. In Carnegie's narration, Lizzy, however, has learned that "there could be many different versions of a fairy tale" (132). She rejects Blondie's beautification of her memory by pointing out what is missing in Blondie's version: "What you don't see in this story is how crowded it was, and how people pushed, and how hot it was, like an oven" (132). The last thing Blondie wants her daughters to remember is the car accident in China, but in Lizzy's eyes, it has become one of the "secret things" in the house that lead her to accuse her adoptive parents of being liars (208). Blondie's intention to romanticize Wendy's adoption into a standardized fairy tale thus proves to be a failure.

Similarly, unlike the adoption fairytale narratives, the adopted girls do not live happily ever after with their adoptive parents. After being taken to the United States, Wendy cries for months "all night in her sleep," causing Blondie and Carnegie to seriously consider moving to a place like China: "If we had believed Chinatown would feel like China to her, we would have moved" (207). Blondie's statement hints that they believe Wendy would be happier if she had stayed in China, thus disrupting the common narrative that the United States is the only permanent home provider for Chinese orphans. After living with her adoptive parents for nine years, Wendy still prefers to be left alone and is not used to hugs from Blondie. She even flinches when Blondie gently touches her knee. While Wendy's reaction might be caused by the possibility that she had spent her first ten months in her Chinese orphanage alone and is not used to having physical touch, as Blondie keeps wondering, it does provide a different picture from the adoption fairytale narratives that are filled with images in which the loving white adoptive mother embracing the adopted child.

As the girls grow older, their relationship with Blondie is neither easy nor happy. Lizzy, for example, is depicted as often challenging Blondie and doubting her sincerity as a mother. Indeed, as a fifteen-year-old girl, her adolescence and rebellious character partly explain the difficult relationship between her and Blondie. However, attributing Lizzy's tough relationship with Blondie only to her adolescent defiance is insufficient, especially considering the fact that she develops immediate intimacy with Lan and views her as her real mother, as I will demonstrate in the following section.

Who is the Real Mother? Denaturalizing Motherhood

One of the prominent features in the common adoption narratives is the naturalization of motherhood based on adoption by, for instance, utilizing the trope of "the right match," or by erasing the trace of the birth mother or other birth children in the adoptive family, or by erasing the racial differences between the child and the adoptive mother. Jen, however, challenges these narratives and complicates the naturalization of adoptive motherhood by foregrounding the racial differences between Blondie and her Asian adoptees and by positioning Lan—the nanny from China whose age and ethnicity cause the adopted girls to imagine her as their birth mother— in the adoptive family. While denaturalizing the transracial adoptive mother-daughter relationship, Jen also rejects a view of motherhood based on racial/ethnic homogeneity as a given and demonstrates that motherhood is a socially constructed concept.

Jen's first strategy to denaturalize Blondie's adoptive motherhood is to create Lizzy, the adolescent, "mixed-up soup de jour" Asian adopted daughter who always denies Blondie as her real mother (8). Lizzy was adopted in the United States by Carnegie when he was a graduate student, and because of Lizzy, Blondie decided to marry him and help him take care of her. Although she has Asian ancestry, Lizzy's ethnic origin is uncertain. Compared with Wendy who always knows that she was adopted from China, Lizzy is sharper, more cynical and confrontational, and more sensitive to the racial differences between her and Blondie. Lizzy is the one who always claims that Blondie is a "phony mother," that she does not belong to the family, and that she will leave the family to look for her "real mother" (214, 216):

> LIZZY / It was like some present she popped out of her pocket all wrapped up but you know she didn't wrap herself……

—You're just saying that! I said. How do you know? You're just saying what it says in the adoption books you should say.

—You asked me what I thought, not what I knew.

—I could tell by the way you said 'parent' like that. That is like straight out of a book.

—And what should I have said?

—'Take care of.' That's what normal people say. My real mother knew she 'couldn't take care of me.'

—We try to say 'birth mother.' Because I'm your real mother too. Both your mothers are real mothers.

—That's like out of a book too! (212).

……

LIZZY / —If you were my real mother, you would understand! If you were my real mother, you wouldn't be this brick wall! If you were my real mother, you'd be like Lanlan! (214).

In this argument about who is her "real mother," Lizzy claims that only her birth mother is her real mother, and that the birth mother should be like Lan, someone of her race, thus negating Blondie's motherhood because of their racial differences. By emphasizing whatever Blondie says as being "out of a book," Lizzy further questions Blondie's maternal love for her. It should be noted that while constantly challenging Blondie as her "real mother," Lizzy never questions Carnegie as her "real" father, though according to Carnegie, Blondie is the parent who does "far more of the juggling—far more of the feeding and picking up and temperature taking—than I; she arrange[s] more play dates, [drives] more car pool, [does] more open houses, field trips, potlucks, bake sales" (287). As a more devoted parent, the white mother Blondie still can not win Lizzy's heart. Through the thorny adoptee Lizzy, therefore, Jen raises the question of whether racial differences in the adoptive mother-daughter relationship can be easily erased and whether motherhood based on adoption can be naturalized.

Blondie also finds that racial difference between her and her daughters is a hard issue that needs particular strength to handle:

> BLONDIE / When I strolled Wendy through town now I was reminded of the days when having a child of another race was simply a matter of fending off ignorance. How simple that was—how easy to know what was right. When people asked, *Is she yours? Or, Where did you get her?* I could laugh and feel proud—of myself, of my family. It was a species of vanity. I had struggled against it when Lizzy was a baby. But now, I sometimes brought Wendy out into the world to feel that challenge, and my own fine resistance. I had always drawn strength from the fact that my hair next to Lizzy's should be a picture that challenged the heart. Now I drew on it purposefully, the way other women drew on the knowledge that they were intelligent or thin (132-3) (italics in the original).

Blondie narrates her psychological changes in the process of raising Lizzy and Wendy over the years. That her sense of pride was something she had to fight against when first adopting Lizzy but now turns to be her tool to get rid of her powerlessness when adopting Wendy is striking, indicating how her "vanity" as a white adoptive mother of an Asian adoptee is gradually worn down by the challenge of raising racially different children. Jen thus demonstrates that racial difference is a key post-adoption issue that both Asian adoptees and the white adoptive mother have to deal with.

To further denaturalize Blondie's adoptive motherhood, Jen adds a biological child, Bailey, another "soup-de-jour" child, long after the Wongs' adoption of the girls, and Bailey's birth soon changes the way the adopted girls and Blondie relate to each other. Right after Bailey is born, the girls notice the differences in how Blondie treats their brother. "You see? She was never that close to us, even when we were babies. Not like she was to Bailey," Lizzy reminds Wendy, who speculates that "maybe Mom is going to be exactly the same with Bailey as with us when he grows up" (11). Even Blondie herself feels the different ways in which she raises her adopted daughters and her biological son:

> To have held his soft skull as it emerged from my body; to have felt him tugging at my breast; to have ached for him in turn, sleeping when he slept. What a unit we were! I had never known anything like it.
>
> I watched him in a different way than I had watched the girls. Maybe I would have seen him more clearly anyway, having watched other children grow up—being more practiced. Better understanding his wants, for example, I saw

> how, even at four or five months, he pushed other people away from my breasts—something I might not have caught in Lizzy or Wendy even if I had nursed them (156).

Here we see how Bailey's birth complicates Blondie's relationship with her adopted daughters by making her realize the natural, exclusive, biological bond as something she has never experienced with them. Although never admitting that she favors Bailey over Lizzy and Wendy, Blondie has to persuade herself that "Ha[ve] I not loved them deeply and well, as if they were from the beginning my own?" (133). The simile structure of "as if" betrays her consciousness that the girls did not belong to her "from the beginning," as Bailey did, and compromises her claims that she "completely love[s] the girls, just the same" (156). By adding a biological son after the girls' adoption and emphasizing Blondie's natural bond with him, Jen foregrounds the fact that the relationship between Blondie and her adoptees lacks a natural bond, thus challenging narratives constructed by white adoptive parents that try to naturalize the adoptive parent-child relationship in transnational adoption.

Bailey's blond appearance further complicates the way Blondie looks at the girls and Bailey. Blondie is happy to see Bailey inherited more genes from her side than from Carnegie's:

> I can confess that I loved it more than I would have said that my genes were not swallowed up by Carnegie's. I had assumed that they would be, somehow—that dark would trump fair. A reasonable assumption, given what I knew from paint boxes and markers.
>
> But that was wrong—and I was surprised what it meant to me, not to find my blood, my side, myself drowned out.
>
> Some would say that the point of raising children is of course self-replication. How hopelessly idealistic, to imagine love and values might count more than genes! But truly, I did. …And yet, and yet (155-156).

Having "truly" imagined that her love for the girls matters more than the fact that they do not have her genes, as she admits here, Bailey's birth and his blondness cause Blondie to consider that such a thought is idealistic. As Jennifer Ann Ho argues, Blondie's pride and her concern over Bailey's blond appearance indicates that "racial phenotype connotes belonging—to have your child physically resemble you, racially, means that your child is connected to you and your

family heritage."[8] In other words, the girls' lack of racial resemblance with Blondie increases their sense of not belonging to her, as Lizzy often complains. By constructing Bailey as blond, Jen demonstrates that the racial phenotype and parental genes in Blondie's relationship with Bailey is exactly what is lacking in her relationship with the girls, and challenges the common adoption narratives which claim that the adoptive mother's love for the adopted child conquers all difficulties, such as racial differences, between them.

Blondie and Carnegie's mixed-race marriage also adds to the complexity of her adoptive motherhood in that it singles her out as the only racially different parent of the girls in the family. Unlike most white adoptive families in which the issue of adoption can be faced by the white couple together, Blondie's marriage with a Chinese American man places her in a situation in which she has to fight for her parenthood alone. Carnegie, because of his shared race/ethnicity with the girls, seldom feels the same way Blondie does and often either betrays her jokingly in their dealing with the girls or considers her sense of crisis as a mother and hostess oversensitive or ungrounded. After Blondie's conflict with Lizzy caused by her discovery that the girls are doing homework in Lan's place with the TV on, which Blondie forbids, Carnegie narrates his conversation with Blondie:

> CARNEGIE / —Lan loves them, I said.
>
> —She'll do anything to win them, said Blondie. She never says no.
>
> —How can we expect her to micromanage the girls when she isn't even supposed to be on in the evening?
>
> —She encourages them. Don't you see? How she encourages them? Do you know what Lizzy said to me? *Why do you have to talk in that fake voice. That's what we all want to know around here.* We all. We all. You tell me who she means.
>
> —Blondie. Think about what we tell her to do at school. Ignore people, right? You should practice what we preach and forget about what she says. Put that aging memory to work for you.
>
> —Forget about what she says? Ignore her? She's my daughter.
>
> —She's fifteen.

[8] Ho, *Understanding Gish Jen*, 74.

—And what about Lan? How old is she, please tell me. How old is she?

(266) (italics in the original)

Apparently, Carnegie and Blondie view the incident in different ways. Blondie sees that Lizzy challenges her motherhood because of Lan's deliberate conspiracy and her allowing the children to do what Blondie prohibits in the family. In Blondie eyes, Lan is winning the children over and robbing her of motherhood by never saying "no" to them. Lizzy's accusation of her "fake voice" is especially nerve-racking to her, reminding her that as a white woman she is a "fake" mother. However, sharing the same race/ethnicity with Lan and the girls, Carnegie interprets Lan's attitude toward the children as "love." Moreover, by suggesting that Blondie forget Lizzy's words like an old person who has an "aging memory," Carnegie takes Blondie's frustration and fear of losing her adoptive motherhood for granted. By portraying the adoptive parents as mixed-race and constructing incidents like this, Jen once again highlights racial difference between Blondie and the girls, thus disrupting the narratives created by white adoptive parents that try to remove traces of racial differences between the adoptive parents and the adoptees.

By far the most effective way Jen utilizes race and ethnicity to denaturalize Blondie's adoptive motherhood is to insert Lan, the Chinese woman whose age and ethnicity both engender the girls' imagination of their birth mother and threaten Blondie's motherhood based on transnational/transracial adoption. Suddenly exposed to a Chinese woman who in age could be their mother, Lizzy and Wendy show spontaneous intimacy with Lan and become closer to her as time goes by. Wendy claims that "Lan is like us. She just is, I can't explain it"; Lizzy says that she would not be surprised to "find out Lan was her real mother" (202). Lan's presence brings changes to both girls. Wendy starts to pick up Chinese like "gangbusters," learning faster than other members in the family, so much so that Lizzy protests when Wendy talks with Lan in Chinese, in case they are sharing any secrets in Chinese without her (210). Having been long troubled by her status as a "soup de jour," Lizzy immediately bonds with Lan, through whom she seems to find her racial and ethnic identity. Prior to her arrival, Lizzy dyed her hair blond to match Blondie's and the white community, but with Lan living in the family, she dyes her hair back to black. The trip to China to adopt Wendy once made her strongly detest China, but under Lan's influence, Lizzy announces that she loves China. She also starts to speak for China and criticize America, all in Lan's tone.

The girls' intimacy with Lan simultaneously alienates Blondie and threatens her motherhood. The tacit understanding and harmony between Wendy and Lan makes Blondie nervous. As Wendy narrates, "when we don't talk Chinese, Mom's upset as Lizzy. Because sometimes we hang around and don't even have to talk. It's like Lanlan knows what I'm thinking anyway, and like I can feel how she's feeling too, especially if she's feeling sad" (210). While Wendy has never wanted to be touched by Blondie, she now enjoys hanging out with Lan hand in hand. Both from China, Wendy and Lan seem to have a natural bond that resembles the connection between Blondie and Bailey. As Blondie laments to her best friend Gabriela, with Lan's presence in the family, "the girls are no longer quite mine" (202).

Feeling more and more invaded, Blondie decides to fight back to win her daughters and her home back. She makes efforts to normalize her relationship with Lan and earnestly learns from her how to cook Chinese food. She even quits her high-paid job and spends more time with Lizzy and Wendy, talking with and listening to them. However, all these endeavors fail. When she finds that Lan almost wins over Bailey by napping with him, Blondie is outraged. "She already has the girls. She cannot have Bailey, too, said Blondie …I want my home back, she went on. Where this is my house, and these are my children, I get to decide what the rules are. I get to decide who sleeps with who" (280). In Carnegie's voice, Blondie is depicted as an irritated and frustrated mother who has already lost her daughters and now almost loses her birth son. Seeing all her efforts have been in vain, Blondie quits and leaves home with Bailey.

Portraying Blondie as a defeated white adoptive mother, however, does not mean that Jen constructs motherhood based on racial/ethnic homogeneity as natural. Although the girls bond with Lan and for some time hope Lan could be their "real mother," after Blondie leaves home, they eventually realize who is their "real mother":

> WENDY / Lizzy says Lanlan is in love with Dad, maybe she wouldn't mind becoming our real mother.
>
> —Except that she's not our real mother, I say. Mom's our real mother.
>
> —Obviously, says Lizzy (360).

Blondie wins her daughters back not with the efforts she makes but with her absence from the family. In Jen's own words, "Once Blondie leaves, the family is destroyed in a way that clearly points to her being its heart. They may think that ethnicity matters to them more, but finally it

doesn't. By the end, it is clear that Blondie is their real mother."[9] In other words, while acknowledging that the girls' race/ethnicity partly causes their closeness with Lan and alienation from Blondie, Jen does not denounce motherhood based on racial difference, but demonstrates, in her own words, that "grouping people by ethnicity is nothing."[10]

Jen further complicates the concept of motherhood by arguing, through Wendy, that every child in the family, including Bailey, is "adopted":

> WENDY / But Lizzy says Mom just wants us not to hate Bailey, since we do.
>
> —I don't, I say.
>
> She says I do, though. She says that I might not realize it, but that I hate him for being bio and a boy and a Bailey, not like us, the one child Mom took with her from the house.
>
> —He isn't a Bailey exactly, I say, he's soup du jour, like you. He's just been like more adopted by Mom than by Dad.
>
> Lizzy laughs when I say that.
>
> —How can he be adopted, she says, he's natural.
>
> —He is, I say. You're just jealous because you think he's more adopted than you (363).

In Wendy's eyes, Bailey being the biological son and looking white mark no difference between his and her relationship with Blondie. In other words, all children in the family, regardless of genetic connections or race/ethnicity, are all adopted, though to different degrees, by Blondie. Jen thus blurs the line between biological children and adopted ones, and shows that motherhood, whether it is based on adoption, blood ties, or homogeneous race/ethnicity, is a social construct.

Jen further denaturalizes both motherhoods based on adoption and on racial/ethnic homogeneity by ending the novel in ambiguity. The book ends with Carnegie suffering from a heart attack that draws all family members, including Blondie, together. In the waiting room of the hospital, as Wendy notices:

> One corner of the waiting room is ours because that's where we put our stuff, by the window. We take up five seats, but Bailey just uses his to jump off of. Mom

[9] Dale Raben, "A Typical American Family."
[10] Ibid.

> sits across from Lanlan and her tummy. They both have snacks for Bailey, and Bailey plays with them both. But it's like they're on opposite sides of the earth instead of in the same little corner, if one of them walks in front of the other, the other looks down. Mom's eyes barely even look blue anymore.
>
> It's hard to believe you could ever call either one of them a love anything (378).

In Wendy's eyes, in this little corner that makes a temporary home for them, the two women now cannot be distinguished by the binary of host/guest, boss/nanny, wife/love wife, citizen/immigrant, and white/nonwhite (the only physical feature Wendy observes that marks their racial differences is the color of Blondie's eyes, which do not look blue anymore). In these ambiguities, the genetic bond between the mother and child is no longer important, nor is racial homogeneity or differences. Both women seem to be mothers to Bailey, who takes snacks from both and plays with both. Jen thus complicates the concept of motherhood by denaturalizing both adoptive and birth motherhoods, as well as motherhoods based on both racial difference and homogeneity. That is, motherhood is not a given based on blood, genes, or racial grouping, but a socially constructed concept created by certain social groups for ideological purposes. Her debunking of motherhood as a given thus challenges both narratives of white adoptive parents that intend to rationalize adoption by naturalizing adoptive motherhood and the tendency in the United States to group people by race and ethnicity, as Jen herself often encountered in the process of raising her two mixed-race children.[11]

Disrupting the Power Dynamics between First World and Third World Women

In this novel, Jen also disrupts a common First World white feminist gaze upon Third World women by positioning a lower-class Chinese woman in the white adoptive mother's middle-class household and making this woman not only a menace to the adoptive mother's motherhood and mixed-race marriage, but also one that thwarts her racial and class superiorities.

[11] Jen reveals in one interview that the Wongs resemble her own family—the mixed-race marriage between her and her white husband, two mixed-race children but looking very different as one has blond hair while the other has black, and a German au pair—which, in her own words, helped shape themes of this book. See Dale Raben, "Behind the Book, Gish Jen's 'The Love Wife': A Typical American Family" in *Library Journal*, (July 2004), 68. In another interview done by Carole Burns, she also admits that as both her daughter and the German au pair are blond, when they went out together, "people often thought that she was the mother, and I was the nanny." See Carole Burns, "Off the Page."

Lan's arrival in the family disrupts the racial and class relations between her and Blondie. When Lan first arrives, Blondie views her with a sense of superiority as a white, middle-class American woman. At that point, Blondie is the center of her family, contributing a bigger paycheck than Carnegie every month and setting the rules for the family. She enjoys her full-time, high-position job and the artistically disordered garden of her suburban house. Lan, however, as Blondie observes, does not come from "a city proper," but from a Chinese town that "can hardly be called rich" (15). As Carnegie's distant relative, she comes with a student visa but serves as a nanny in the family. Blondie apparently has a sense of racial and class superiority to Lan, considering her family as "happier" and "more comfortable"; "You can't seriously envy someone who's lived through the Cultural Revolution! Do you realize what life is like there?" (52).

However, Lan's presence soon dismantles Blondie's sense of superiority as the white hostess in her household. Jen starts the novel with Blondie's narration: "The day Lan came, you could still say whose family this was—Carnegie's and mine," which foreshadows that her family will be changed by Lan's arrival (3). Lan creates "a circle of charm" on the very first day at the airport by drawing all other family members close to her except Blondie, who "remain[s] outside" (16). At the airport when the family meets Lan, as Blondie observes, Lizzy and Wendy make a S-M-L set with Lan, and Carnegie blushes when Lan "smile[s] her first full, true smile—a completely sweet, open, girlish smile" (17). With Lan's presence and her increasing influence in the family, Blondie feels "invaded": "Is this still my home?" (247). One day when Blondie returns home and sees her Asian family members sitting together at the dining table like a natural family with Lan, who occupies her hostess seat, she feels like an intruder. On Carnegie's birthday, when everybody is sitting at the table, she observes the oddity:

> BLONDIE / ……
>
> "But here it was still, and how odd our family looked in it——all those heads of black hair, with just two heads of blond.

> The Wongs and the Baileys.
>
> Any passerby would have thought that Lan and Carnegie were the husband and wife of the family, and that I was visiting with my son, Bailey" (245).

As Jeanne Sokolowski argues, Jen inverts the relationship between the hostess and the guest by depicting Lan taking Blondie's position as Carnegie's wife and Blondie feeling like an outsider in the family.[12] Although Blondie was the minority in her own family even before Lan's arrival, Lan's presence further exacerbates her sense of being excluded and severely unsettles her racial superiority as a white woman.

However, Lan is not the first person that frustrates Blondie's sense of superiority as a white woman; it already happened previously when the family adopted Wendy in China where she was exposed to the gaze of Chinese people and she realized that she, rather than the Chinese, was the Other and abnormal. Surrounded by Chinese people, Blondie found herself singled out and separated from Carnegie and Lizzy by their stares, as if she had "the wrong skin for the climate" (120). Blondie's sense of superiority was dissolved by the stare, so much so that she began to stare at herself in the mirror and at Carnegie, which further destroyed her confidence as a white woman.[13] She noticed that Carnegie's Asian skin would make him "age so beautifully," but her white skin would "look so wrinkly." She told Carnegie that they would look "so different" and "even less natural together" when they got old—she would look "ten years senior and pasty," like Carnegie's third-grade teacher, following him around, and like a camel married to a person (117). She also realized Chinese women, even old ones, were like "gymnasts," compared with her white body, which looked "baggy" and "voluminous" (116-7). Rather than portraying white Blondie as unmarked, human, and normal, and the Chinese as Other and abnormal, Jen exposes Blondie's white body under the gaze of the Chinese and constructs her

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[12] Jeanne Sokolowski, "The Limits of Hospitality in Gish Jen's *The Love Wife*," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 1.

[13] This resembles what bell hooks argues in her essay, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," that the oppositional gaze upon the whites has empowered black people. See bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 198.

whiteness as the other, abnormal, unhuman, and hyper visible.[14] Moreover, rather than gazing upon Third World Chinese women through pitying eyes from a distance, Blondie was surrounded by Chinese women who looked well-built while she saw herself as "baggy" and "voluminous," an inversion which further challenges condescending First World feminists' view of Chinese women as victims. By positioning Blondie among Chinese women and Lan in Blondie's household, the novel displays how Blondie has to manage her own otherness when she can no longer safely imagine herself to be invisible and when she is confronted with Third World women face to face. In other words, her racial privilege as normative and unmarked derives from gazing upon and othering Third World women from afar, and erasure of such a safe distance reveals her own otherness and severely diminishes her sense of superiority.

As a career woman and middle-class wife, Blondie also loses her class superiority in the presence of Lan. The scene in which she learns from Lan how to cook Chinese food, as a strategy to "normalize her relationship with Lan," is an excellent case in point (240). She accompanies Lan to different grocery stores and cooks with her in Lan's way—wasting no food and involving a large amount of time and labor, which Blondie has always considered worthless. The two women's attitudes towards cooking reflects their different class backgrounds. A survivor of the Cultural Revolution and from a small town in Shandong province, Lan insists that every part of a vegetable, such as broccoli stalks, should be saved, no matter how much time is involved in preparing them. However, Blondie, a professional woman who draws a big paycheck every month and a wife and mother in a middle-class household, thinks that time should be used to spend with her children rather than in peeling broccoli stalks. Therefore, "cooking with Lan in Lan's way" reflects how Blondie, in the battle of winning her home back, compromises her class superiority.

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[14] Scholars such as Richard Dyer and Matthew Frye Jacobson have forcefully argued that race is not only a conception but also a perception, namely, not only because of how the differences are comprehended but also how they are seen, and that whiteness "secures a position of power" both because of the colonial normality of white people as "standards of humanity" and nonwhites as the Other and abnormal, and of the white skin being "unseen" or "pass[ing] as a feature of the natural landscape." See Richard Dyer. *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 9, 45; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1998), 10.

The cooking lessons also relegate Blondie from hostess to student while Lan ascends from nanny to "master," thus reversing the power relations between the two women. In Blondie's eyes, Lan is "an exacting master," who not only does her own slicing and whose cutting is "humiliatingly exquisite," but scrutinizes her work in a critical eye:

> CARNEGIE / She turned to do something else, then paused to watch Blondie again, a frown rucking her forehead.
>
> Blondie blushed.
>
> Lan immediately smiled her half smile, and said:—Very good! You are my number-one student.
>
> Still Blondie managed, with the next whack of her butcher knife, to slice neatly into her left thumb.
>
> —Omigod, omigod! She cried. Omigod.
>
> ……
>
> —You will be okay, said Lan decisively. And with surprising authority: — Don't cry (244).

In a joking tone, Carnegie narrates the scene in which Blondie clumsily cuts food and her own thumb under Lan's stern scrutiny. Turning Blondie into a student who cries like a child, and Lan into a rigorous teacher who talks "decisively" and "with surprising authority," Jen further thwarts Blondie's sense of superiority as a middle-class white woman in front of the lower-class Chinese woman.

By depicting the First World and Third World women encountering each other, Jen also demonstrates that racialization can be generated both ways rather than only from the white to the nonwhite. On the one hand, she exposes that Chinese (Americans) have long been racialized and excluded in the United States. On the other hand, she depicts Blondie as being ostracized by her mother-in-law, Mama Wong, and later by Lan. Blondie has been racialized and rejected by Mama Wong from the very beginning of her marriage to Carnegie. Her real name is Janie, but Mama Wong despises her and always calls her Blondie. That Blondie allows herself to be nicknamed so is especially significant, as it shows how she is discriminated against by her Chinese family

members, on the one hand, and signifies her seeming openness to such discrimination, on the other. At the beginning of the novel, when her best friend Gabriela is surprised that Blondie can tolerate being nicknamed in such a mocking way by Mama Wong and Carnegie, Blondie explains that it is her choice:

> BLONDIE / I tried to tell her that she could think of Blondie as my married name, as if I'd changed my first name instead of my last. For that was the way I was—or thought I was, before Lan came. An open person. A flexible person. Had I not being voted Most Sympathetic to Others in high school? (4)

Here Blondie attempts to show her openness and nobility to tolerate racialization from her Chinese family members. However, the temporal adverbial "before Lan came" betrays the limitations of her nobility. Indeed, Lan treats Blondie no better than Mama Wong did. Lan seldom talks to Blondie, and when she does, she treats Blondie like a domineering boss. Both Mama Wong and Lan reject the fact that Blondie speaks Chinese most fluently in the family, as if her blond appearance delegitimizes her Chinese language skills. Blondie recalls how Mama Wong "had made shriveling fun of my Chinese"(169). Similarly, although Blondie always tries to talk with Lan in Chinese, Lan never speaks Chinese to her, which reminds Blondie that no matter how fluent her Chinese may be, she is still an outsider to the Chinese. Like Mama Wong who always warns Carnegie not to trust Blondie, Lan views her as "fake" and assumes that "her smile [hides] a knife" (136). Lan also considers white men and women, including Blondie, too hairy, "one hundred percent like monkey" and that their smell makes her "want to throw up" (47). Therefore, Lan racializes Blondie as a capitalist exploitative boss, a fake person, a monkey-like smelly white woman, and an Other whose command of Chinese never sounds natural to real Chinese like herself.

In this process, Jen gives agency, of which Chinese women have long been deprived by some First World feminists, to the Third World woman. Aside from her alienation of Blondie, Lan also exerts her agency through her silent subversion of Blondie's status as the white hostess and adoptive mother. She says nothing when Blondie arranges for her to stay in the "garage-nee-barn built especially for an au pair," but interprets with hostility what seems to be Blondie's good intention of giving her privacy as an evil desire to make her "live in the barn with the goat" (136). She never acknowledges the girls' adoption and always perceives them as orphans who

have “no real mother” and “no real family” (223): “The only people who really wanted me were little Wendy and Lizzy—girls with no mothers, like me” (136). Lan also refuses to set a place for herself at the family dining table or eat anything the Wongs pile on her plate, and considers the food Blondie leaves out on her stairs in case she was hungry as “leftovers” for a servant.

The Love Wife further constructs Lan as the agent of her own life in the United States, if not in China, who uses her race/ethnicity and sexuality to threaten Blondie’s motherhood and wifehood and earn her position in the family. Realizing the girls’ intimacy with her and alienation from Blondie are primarily due to her ethnicity as a Chinese woman, she plays her role as a surrogate Chinese mother who is always available to the girls whenever they visit her, welcoming them “with a big surprised noise, as if no one has ever visited her before,” and treating them with all kinds of Chinese snacks (222). Wendy recalls that Blondie gives them Chinese snacks as well, but they taste “better when Lanlan gives [them] to us” (222). Much as Blondie’s identity as a white woman delegitimizes her Chinese speaking in front of Mama Wong and Lan, the Chinese snacks she prepares for the girls are far less tasty and authentic than those presented by Lan, who is a real Chinese in the girls’ eyes.

Like the girls, the Chinese American husband, Carnegie, is immediately attracted to Lan, the pretty woman of his own race and ethnicity. Although it is Carnegie who expresses his sexual interest in Lan, she conspires with him because compared with men with whom she had sexual relationships in China, Carnegie was richer, nicer, and “not short” (235). She finally gains her position in the family and squeezes Blondie out when she returns to the Wongs pregnant from a short marriage with a Chinese man, Su, who dies in a big fire. After Blondie leaves home, Lan tries to please Carnegie by cooking delicious food for him and serving him like a king. Therefore, far from being a passive, powerless victim, Lan displays various forms of agency in the middle-class American family.

Disrupting the Binary between Immigrants and Adoptees

Besides depicting Blondie being racialized by the two Chinese women, Jen also exposes how Chinese (Americans), including Lizzy and Wendy, have been racialized in America. By doing so, she disrupts the binary of conventional immigrants as unassimilable, undesirable outsiders and adoptees as assimilable members of white families and U.S. national body as seen

in conventional adoption narratives, and points out the possibility that the adoptees might also be excluded.

Through her portrayal of several Chinese immigrants and Carnegie the Chinese American in the book, Jen displays how they are excluded in the U.S. national body no matter how much material wealth they have gained or whether they are accepted into citizenship. Mama Wong, though always overbearing and extremely successful in her business, clearly realizes that none of her tenants cares about her as a landlady even when "her belt rattle[s] certain keys," and she must always "stand back and smile" at them (30). When Mama Wong suffers from Alzheimer's in her old age, the other patients in the nursing home still racialize her as a threat to them:

> CARNEGIE / One day we came in to find Mama Wong covered with bruises. She had been beaten up by another patient, who had thought Mama Wong a polar bear on the loose. Get back in your cage! he had yelled. Later he said that he never would have lifted a finger if the bear had moved. But the bear didn't move. It just stood there in the hallway as if it didn't speak English. He had had to hit it as a matter of public safety (35).

Using her dark humor, Jen describes how Mama Wong is racialized as "a polar bear" who does not move and speak English and is ordered to "get back in your cage." As historian Jean Phaelzer has documented, Chinese immigrants had been driven out and rounded up from the 1850s to the early twentieth century.[15] While such public expulsions and attacks against Chinese immigrants were far less common at the turn of twenty-first century in which the novel is set, Jen reminds her readers that U.S. racialization of Chinese never really disappears. Chinese immigrants have also long been stereotyped by U.S. mainstream society as speaking broken English.[16] By depicting how other patients view Mama Wong as a "polar bear"—a type of bear that looks white but actually has black skin and a ferocious nature—without an ability to "speak English," Jen

[15] Jean Phaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007).
[16] Elaine H. Kim, for instance, has made such criticism. See Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and Temple University Press, 2006), 12.

criticizes the U.S. dominant discourse that treats immigrants of color—Chinese in this case—as unassimilable outsiders and menace to American society. The white patient's perception of Mama Wong as a polar bear reflects the sad fact that even with their economic success, Chinese immigrants are still "non-white, indelibly foreign others."[17] Jen makes Carnegie, the Chinese American, speak out about this event. Seeing his own mother being attacked, Carnegie uses a joking tone to suppress his anger and bitterness, through which Jen reminds her readers that what Mama Wong experienced was not a joke but part of the history of Chinese exclusion.

Carnegie and Su—the former being a born American and the latter a naturalized one—encounter no less racial hostility than Mama Wong. When Carnegie and Blondie got married in the summer beach house of the Bailey family in Maine, one man yelled at him, "You leave our women alone!" (81). Years later, when he returns to the house to resolve the issue with trespassing by local residents, Carnegie meets a group of white teenagers on the beach. As Carnegie narrates:

> One skinhead felt compelled to cup his girlfriend's near-naked breasts from behind and shake them at me, but still he yelled: —eat your heart out, chink boy.
>
> *Chink boy*.
>
> This was the sort of moment when I took refuge in ownership. Shielding myself, mostly, the way my mother taught me: with the knowledge that I had a net worth several times my tormentor's. *Eat your own heart out. Let's see your tax return*. I wanted to say. Also, though, privately, I used another knowledge: that I had a white wife, with breasts many times more beautiful than the pair being flaunted (165-166) (italics in the original).

Carnegie is racialized as a sexual menace to white women in his wedding with Blondie but emasculated and infantilized as a "chink boy" in this scene by the "skinhead" who flaunts his girlfriend's breasts to provoke Carnegie's envy, as if Carnegie could never be fortunate enough to

[17] Though Ellen Wu's criticism focuses on the myth and origin of the model minority during the Cold War, it still speaks to the truth about Chinese immigrants at the turn of the twenty-first century. See Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success*, 8.

touch a pair of white breasts like those. Carnegie's instinct of taking "refuge in ownership" — namely, drawing upon his financial capital and his marriage to Blondie to claim his identity as an American—discloses the sad fact that Chinese Americans usually have to negotiate their existence and national identity not through who they are but through what they possess. However, as Ellen D. Wu argues in her analysis of the myth of the model minority, the socioeconomic mobility of Asian Americans actually creates "new modes of exclusion" that compromise their "improvements in social standing" and blurs the boundaries between exclusion and inclusion.[18] In other words, Carnegie's contribution of taxes to the country and his marriage to a white wife whose "breasts are many times more beautiful" ostensibly mark him as being included in the national body, but this scene debunks such inclusion as an illusion and reveals that he is still excluded as a non-white.

Su also encounters racialization and exclusion by the same group of white teenagers when he and Lan live in the Bailey summer house after their marriage. When Su tries to drive the people away from the beach, the whites shout back that the beach never belongs to "fucking foreigners," and sneer at Su when he protests that he is not a foreigner but a U.S. citizen. Trying hard to prove that he has passed the citizenship test, Su is then told that "the fact that you're a citizen doesn't make you an American"(340-1). Jen situates Carnegie and Su in the same discriminative, exclusive politics of identity, disclosing the harsh fact that at the turn of the twenty-first century, such racism still haunts Chinese Americans and immigrants and continues to bar them from the U.S. national body, so much so that even possessions that mark their social standing or citizenship do not ensure that they are seen as Americans.

The novel further unsettles the binary between immigrants as unassimilable outsiders and adoptees as assimilated family members by showing that adoptees also suffer from racism. Wendy, for instance, is told by her classmate Elaine that she is a Chinese from China rather than "a real American" (205). What is even worse is that the adoptive mother Blondie fails to have

[18] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 8-9.

empathy towards the girls. She does not understand why Wendy is not excited to talk about China in her predominantly white school, and takes Lizzy's struggle as "a soup de jour" for granted by saying that being a German American or Scotch-Irish American, she is also a "soup de jour." Lizzy refutes her immediately:

> LIZZY / — "Yeah, but it doesn't matter as much because you're white and not adopted. Nobody wonders where you're from, nobody asks you.
>
> —Well, I wonder myself.
>
> —It's different, I said. Because if you don't want to wonder, you don't have to.
>
> —Do people ask you where you're from? (213).

Lizzy's retort makes evident how she is suffering from being a nonwhite adoptee and from the same racialized inquiry of "where are you from" as encountered by conventional immigrants, but Blondie simplistically equates Lizzy's being a "soup de jour" with her own being a white "soup de jour" and shrugs off Lizzy's ill feelings caused by such inquiry. Blondie's attitude reflects that she does not understand what her daughters are suffering from in the discriminatory white community. Through Lizzy's seemingly adolescent talkback against Blondie, Jen shows that Asian adoptees often have to fight against racism alone on a daily basis as do conventional immigrants, but white adoptive parent(s) might not necessarily understand what their adopted children are going through.

However, Jen does not portray Blondie as oblivious to racism faced by Asian Americans and immigrants. Blondie has a clear sense that one day her daughters could become targets of racial exclusion. On their way to meet Lan at the airport, Blondie and Lizzy argue about whether people should be sent back to China. Wendy narrates:

> —And what if we don't like her? Says Lizzy. Can we send her back to China?
>
> —Can we send her back to China, sighs Mom.
>
> ……

So instead Mom just says things like how she doesn't like that phrase, sending people back to China. Because people say that even to people who speak perfect English and have been here a long time, she says, and how are you going to like it if people say that to you?

—They aren't going to say that to me, says Lizzy.

—We hope, says Mom (7).

Blondie warns her daughters that not only new immigrants like Lan but those who have been in the country for a long time and who have "perfect" command of English, including adoptees like Lizzy, might be driven out of the country. Jen thus puts adoptees in the same vulnerable situation as conventional immigrants who have been and might continue to be excluded from the U.S. national body. It is ironic that Blondie, as the wife of a Chinese American, is well-informed about racial exclusion against Asian/Americans but fails to see that her daughters are suffering from racism in their everyday life. As scholars have argued, the current age in the United States is the era of covert racism, or what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "racism without racists," though the Trump Era seems to be an exception.[19] Overt racism, like what Blondie warns her daughters of, is just the tip of an iceberg, but covert racism, "rang[ing] extensively to taint all aspects of society," is pervasive, less discernible, less visible, thus "more perilous."[20] Through the discrepancy in Blondie's understanding of racism faced by her daughters, *The Love Wife* exposes the disguising nature of covert racism that affects everyday lives of immigrants, including adoptees, and further debunks the ideology of color-blindness held by many white adoptive parents.

Reconstructing China as a Chaotic, Inhumane, Communist Nation of Orphans

While Lan exerts her agency in the American adoptive family, back in China she is depicted as a passive, tragic, silent victim, with no major difference from the Chinese birth

[19] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 1.
[20] William Y. Chin, "The Age of Covert Racism in the Era of the Roberts Court During the Waning of Affirmation Action," *Rutgers Race and the Law Review* 16, no. 1 (2015): 1-2.

mothers in white adoptive parents' narratives. Through Lan's suffering during and after the Cultural Revolution, Jen reconstructs China as an inhumane, patriarchal Communist nation. Jen's portrayal of the Wongs' trip to adopt Wendy in China also adds to her construction of Communist China as chaotic and inhumane. Throughout the book, Jen also demarcates the white members in the Wong family as non-orphans and Chinese (or Asian) ones as orphans, through which she represents China as a nation of orphans.

In the eyes of the Wongs, China in 1990, when Wendy was adopted, was chaotic, as exemplified in the car accident they experienced. As Blondie recalls, when the car hit the peddler, a "mob" gathered quickly to surround it (126). The Wongs later learned that a local "insufficient, state-run" textile factory was closed that day, and that its leaders "conveniently blamed American quotas" by spreading rumors that America set those quotas due to its fear of China and its determination to "keep China weak" (130). Instigated by the rumors, the "mob" threw the car over in "nationalistic resentment" towards Americans, symbolized by the Wongs (130). Blondie uses a Chinese character, *luan,* or chaos, to describe the scene. Carnegie suspects that rather than recognizing them as Americans, the "mob" was more hostile to the car, or any car, as a sign of privilege. "How lucky, in any case, that we'd lived to analyze the tale," Carnegie sighed afterwards (130). In the eyes of Blondie and Carnegie, China is a disorderly place where people are not ruled by reason but by jealousy and rumors spread by irresponsible factory leaders who designate America as a scapegoat for their "mismanagement," and that they are "lucky" to have survived the event (130).

Through the story of Lan as a survivor of the Cultural Revolution, Jen depicts China as dark, patriarchal, and inhumane. She tells how her father was persecuted to death by the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution and she was sent to the countryside in the far north, where she almost died. She repeatedly encountered sexual abuse by Communist officials during the Cultural Revolution. As she recalls, "They made fun of the condition of my lips—so soft and kissable, said one older cadre. I allowed them to chap, that they not be kissed. Still they were, of

course" (99). The end of the Cultural Revolution did not end her sexual exploitation. Seen as a "worn shoe" —a metaphor originated in feudal China but used until recently to refer to women who are sexually loose—she acquiesced to let her old and short neighbor, who "agreed that I had no choice," to use her body (100). After the Cultural Revolution, she worked as a laborer in a shoe-making factory, and after being laid-off, a bar girl, most probably a prostitute. Therefore, though in the United States Lan is portrayed as having agency, she is depicted as a passive, powerless victim back in Communist China, similar to the birth mother in Evans's book. Jen thus treats Communist China as the big Subject in which Chinese women inescapably turn into passive, powerless victims.[21]

Besides Lan's experience, Mama Wong's story before her immigration to the United States and the Wongs' adoption trip in 1990 also speak to a Communist China filled with totalitarian, greedy, irresponsible, and inhumane cadres. At the end of the novel, readers learn that Lan's mother is actually Mama Wong, Carnegie's mother, who fled Communist China by swimming to Hong Kong with a basketball under each of her arms. Combining the narrations of Lan and Carnegie, the story of Mama Wong before her immigration becomes clear to readers. During the war, Mama Wong left her husband and daughter, Lan, and ran away with "an officer in the People's Army," who later deserted her (95). After Mama Wong's death, Carnegie explains why she chose to immigrate by recalling her saying that "I ate so many chili peppers when I was little. Make me too spicy for those Communists. A spicy girl" (184). In other words, her "spicy," or pungent character was not desired by the Communists who demanded her to be absolutely meek and submissive. The "Party member" and the irresponsible leaders of the state-run textile factory the Wongs met in their adoption trip also add to Jen's creation of a Communist China. The Communist Party member, one of Carnegie's distant relatives, for instance, is depicted as greedy. The Wongs brought gifts to all the relatives, with which other relatives were happy, but the Party member "seemed disappointed we didn't bring something bigger" (111). Therefore, through

[21] The concept of a state as the "big Subject" is from Louis Althusser. See Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (2006): 86-111.

Mama Wong, Lan, and the Wongs, Jen depicts an image of Communist cadres that remains villainous over fifty years.

Like the China constructed by Evans, Jen's China is also a dark and patriarchal society haunted by stories of female infantalization and/or victimization. Like Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*, this book is filled with scary Chinese stories—stories in which powerless women and female children are trampled on at the bottom of society, including, for instance, how a father who wanted a son killed a new born baby girl by holding her by the feet like a chicken and smashing her against the wall, and how a woman could be one of many concubines of a man in China. Tan and Kingston claim similar Chinese stories as autobiographical ones, which are problematized by Frank Chin and other scholars as a symptom of subjection to the Western desire that "continue to confirm rather than modify a stereotypical image of the Chinese and their culture."[22] Jen, however, departs from them by constructing these stories as "strange" (in the girls' eyes) or "charming tales" (in Blondie's eyes) through different narrators in different layers—some of which are told by Lan in her Chinese soliloquy, and others of which are retold by the girls (277). The way that Blondie calls the stories "charming tales" and that the girls interpret them as "strange" but are still fascinated by them reflects Jen's attempts to expose Western exoticization (here represented by Blondie and the girls who are raised in the United States) of Chinese women and female children and to resist making authenticity claims on these stories. However, in making Lan a living witness to the stories she tells—according to Lan, some stories are either about or from her relatives—Jen makes these stories part of her construction of Lan as a lower-class, passive, powerless victim in China and part of her construction of a dark, patriarchal China. Thus her attempts to deconstruct these stories is compromised.

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[22] See Frank Chin, "An Introduction to Chinese –and Japanese-American Literature," in *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, ed. Frank Chin et al. (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974), xxiii. The same criticism is seen in Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Autobiography as Guided Chinatown Tour? Maxine Hong Kinston's *The Woman Warrior* and the Chinese American Autobiographical Controversy," *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*. ed. James Robert Payne (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 248-79.

The Communist China Jen creates is also one that dismantles families and produces homeless orphans. It is worth noting that almost all the Chinese (or Asian) characters in the novel are orphans. Lan was orphaned when her mother ran away with the Communist officer and her father was killed by the Red Guards. Besides adoptee girls Lizzy and Wendy, the end of the novel reveals that their adoptive father Carnegie was also an orphan adopted by Mama Wong. In contrast, the only two white members in the Wong's family, Blondie and Bailey, have middle-class families and loving birth parents. By making all Chinese characters orphans and all white characters non-orphans, Jen conforms to the Orientalist binary between East and West, and represents China as a nation of orphans (though Carnegie and Lizzy were adopted within the United States, and Lizzy's ethnicity is not clear). In this sense, Jen's construction of China and Chinese people shares striking similarities with U.S. conventional adoption narratives and does not differ greatly from Kingston and Tan's works, which Frank Chin has criticized for confirming a stereotypical image of China.[23]

Conclusion:

As the only fiction written by a Chinese American author about adoption from China since the 1990s, Jen's novel, *The Love Wife,* is particularly significant in that it challenges and complicates common adoption narratives created by the U.S. media and white adoptive parents by presenting a different adoption narrative. This novel thus adds to the complexity of cultural representations of adoption from China and exposes the selective and incomplete nature of the U.S. conventional adoption narratives.

Besides Jen, a group of coming-of-age Chinese adoptees have also constructed narratives, through the blogosphere, that further complicate and unsettle narratives created by white adoptive parents and the U.S. media. As the next chapter illustrates, these blog narratives also participate in the dismantlement of the immigrant-adoptee dichotomy and they continue to tell stories of adoptees not living happily ever after with their adoptive parents. However, the

[23] Frank Chin, "An Introduction to Chinese –and Japanese-American Literature," xxiii.

adoptee narratives present an even more nuanced picture of post-adoption lives, in which we read both the sentiments of being stuck between two countries/cultures and two selves as shared by paper children immigrants/adoptees, and the particularities unique to contemporary adoptees as adopted and brought up by white middle-class families in the white community.

CHAPTER 7

"I Really Am an Immigrant!": Adoptee Narratives in the Framework of Chinese Immigration[1]

When I was adopted I had to be naturalized just like any other immigrant. This was before the Child Citizenship Act was passed in 2000, which allows adoptees to gain automatic citizenship under certain guidelines. Despite my having to go through naturalization, I still never felt really connected to my "immigrant" identity, just like how I never felt like I was truly Chinese.

Immigrating as a baby I couldn't relate to any of the immigrant stories I read about or watched. It wasn't until I found myself standing outside in the January cold protesting Trump's travel ban at a rally to support immigrants that I felt like I could—and wanted to—accept my identity as an immigrant.

Grace Madigan, "Identifying as an Adoptee and an Immigrant"

In March 2017, Chinese adoptee and university student Grace Madigan posted about her path of accepting her immigrant identity on the *Seattle Globalist*, an online publication channel covering both local and global issues. While anti-immigrant sentiments in the Trump era have played a decisive role in her recognition of her identity as a Chinese immigrant, she also expresses her earlier sense of guilt and "a minor identity crisis" after realizing that she neglected her Chinese roots in one of her self-introductions. Looking back, she attributes her failure to see herself as an immigrant to having been brought up by white parents who gave her "support and love" but were unable to see the world "from [her] perspective as a Chinese American," and notes that "narratives about immigration almost completely leave out stories of international adoptees." Embracing her immigrant identity seems to have empowered her: "Our stories may be different[.] [W]e may be different. But as immigrants we share the strength and resiliency that is necessary to uproot ourselves even if it wasn't by choice and [it means to] begin a new life in a foreign land. That is something to be proud of and embrace. So, who am I? For now, I'm Chinese. I'm adopted. And I'm a proud immigrant."[2]

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[1] I borrowed the title from an online talk given by an Irish adoptee who comments on how her American adoptive mother refuses to consider her as an immigrant. See "Voices of Adoptees: I Really Am an Immigrant!" *Adopted*, accessed June 23, 2017, http://www.adoptedthemovie.com/voices-of-adoptees-i-really-am-an-immigrant/.

[2] Grace Madigan, "Identifying as an Adoptee and an Immigrant," *The Seattle Globalist,* accessed June 20, 2017, http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2017/05/31/identifying-adoptee-immigrant/65348.

Grace's narrative represents a large group of youth and adult Chinese adoptees who have grown up in predominantly white communities and have come to realize that they share experiences and sentiments with conventional Asian immigrants, thus challenging many white adoptive parents' assumption that their adopted children are not immigrants. For instance, Dorow's ethnographic study on eighty white American adoptive parents of Chinese adoptees reveals that the parents "[do] not usually think of their children from China as immigrants," and this phenomenon is prominent among parents of Chinese adoptees because of the "historical legacy of fixing Asians as perpetual (if sometimes desirable) immigrants."[3]

This chapter focuses on blog narratives of contemporary Chinese adoptees to break the immigrant-adoptee dichotomy constructed by many white adoptive parents. A large number of Chinese adoptees have reached adolescence or early adulthood, but they do not usually have freedom to express their thoughts and feelings concerning their adoption. For one thing, they have grown up in an era in which white adoptive parents, especially those of Chinese adoptees, have been particularly articulate in sharing their adoption stories and in creating adoption narratives, thus adoptees' voices are silenced. For another, the whole discourse that adoptees are "lucky" and should feel "grateful" because they were rescued from miserable conditions for a better life also discourages adoptees from speaking out about their true feelings. Sometimes when they share, as some adoptee blogs reveal, they are not understood by other family members. Under such circumstances, blogs provide adoptees with a secure and comfortable space in which to articulate their feelings and negotiate their identities as racially different members in their white families, to criticize responses or inappropriate inquiries from the public, and to build an imagined online community with other adoptees.

By reading blogs posted in the past few years, I demonstrate how adoptee narratives complicate and/or challenge narratives created by white adoptive parents and U.S. mainstream media as the adoptees individualize their own life stories. These narratives criticize mainstream

[3] Dorow, *Transnational Adoption*, 210.

American society and adoptive parents for infantilizing adoptees as perpetual children, narrate how the U.S. public treats them as racialized, sexualized, and exoticized Others, or challenge the naturalized kinship between adoptive parents and adoptees as constructed in some white adoptive parents' narratives. They also reveal that contemporary adoptees share the same predicament of displacement, of loss, of being strangers in their own families, and of being stuck in between worlds made up of birth families and (de facto) adoptive families and of China and the United States, as paper son Leon discussed in Chapter Two. In short, besides displaying the particularities of adoptees as brought up in white families, these narratives also reveal that the racial, ethnic, and cultural issues faced by Chinese adoptees are often the same ones faced by conventional immigrants.

Breaking the Dichotomy of "Immigrants" and "Adoptees"

One central aim of this dissertation is to break the immigrant-adoptee dichotomy. In this section I interrogate why paper children are seldom considered as adoptees by the public and on the flip side, why contemporary adoptees, especially those adopted into white families, are often not regarded as immigrants by many adoptive parents, and demonstrate that rooted in both phenomena are the ideological meanings attached to the concepts of "immigrants" and "adoptees."

Immigrants in the United States—especially those from Asia—have long been considered "unassimilable aliens." To mainstream U.S. society, they are racial others, threats to the U.S. economy and to white families, and associated with inferiority, urban ghettos, sweatshops, poverty, crime, and illegality.[4] The tag "racial ineligibility for citizenship" was first applied to Chinese immigrants but was expanded to almost all Asian immigrants after the 1924 Immigration Act.[5] Catherine Lee observes that as Chinese immigrants became the first group to

[4] George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 4-6. Theresa Catalano also found, through her analysis of online newspapers recounting crimes committed by Latino immigrants, that anti-immigrant ideology is striking in U.S. crime reports. See Theresa Catalano, "Anti-Immigrant Ideology in U.S. Crime Reports: Effects on the Education of Latino Children," *Journal of Latino and Education*12, no. 4 (2013): 254-270.
[5] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 27.

be labeled as "racially unassimilable and undesirable," the racialization of Chinese provided "an effective framework" for subsequent construction of Japanese as inferior, unassimilable, and undesirable.[6] Awareness of the paper-son system before 1965 further strengthened the public impression that all Chinese immigrants were illegal. As Mae Ngai argues, one cultural and legal consequence of paper-son immigration on Chinese immigrants was their racialization as "unscrupulous, devious, and immoral" suspects of illegal immigration, "if not criminals."[7] Although after WWII Asian immigrants, especially those from China and Japan, were also labeled as "model minorities," they are still considered "non-white" and "indelibly foreign others," as Ellen Wu has forcefully argued.[8] In the twenty-first century, according to Ronald Schmidt Sr., et al, although eighty-five percent of immigrants who arrived after 1965 came from Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, U.S. mainstream society continues to view these immigrants as "racialized outsiders, despite the success of some members of these groups."[9]

However, contemporary Chinese adoptees are commonly not considered as immigrants by many adoptive parents. To the extent that the discourse of "immigrants" requires the stigmatization of immigrants as "undesirable" and "unassimilable," that of "adoptees" rests upon the erasure of the children's "foreignness." As adult adoptee Mari Steed observes in her posting, many adoptive parents, in order to "cement their new families," try to remove the fact that "their child arrived from some other country and [think] that adoption somehow magically erases the child's foreign status."[10] Chinese adoptees are differentiated from conventional immigrants not only by many adoptive parents, but also by the Chinese American community. Richard Tessler, Gail Gamache, and Liming Liu have found that Chinese adoptees have been described as "having fallen into a honey jar" and meet a relatively cold reaction from the Chinese American

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[6] Catherine Lee, "Where the Danger Lies," 250.
[7] Ngai, "Legacies of Exclusion," 3-35.
[8] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 8.
[9] Ronald Schmidt Sr. et al, *New Comers, Outsiders and Insiders: Immigrants and American Racial Politics in the Twenty-first Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 14, 18.
[10] "Voices of Adoptees: I Really Am an Immigrant!"

community, because most of them were adopted by middle-class white Americans and enjoy privileges not possible for many conventional immigrants and their children.[11]

However, as some scholars have also demonstrated, adoptees are immigrants. Richard Lee observes that Chinese adoptees in predominantly white families are "overlooked Asian Americans" who are faced with the "transracial adoption paradox" that their families, friends—and sometimes even themselves—perceive them as white while the public views and treats them as foreigners, immigrants, and members of a racial minority.[12] Both Lee and Jodi Kim also view Asian adoptees as "involuntary immigrants." In her book *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*, Kim contends that Cold War interracial adoptees from South Korea and Vietnam as forced migrants were caused not only by the trauma of war, but also by the unequal power relations between the United States and the two nations that rendered birth mothers to provide "crucial reproductive labor" for women in the First World nations. In this process, "social death" of adoptees and the birth mothers was produced in order to create the so-called fiction of "social orphan[s]."[13] Although Kim focuses solely on Cold War adoption of mixed-race children, her concept of adoptees as involuntary immigrants can be applied to contemporary Chinese adoptees as well. They have also been brought to the United States not out of their own will and choice, but as what Kim calls the "surplus products" of capitalism to meet the family-formation needs of Americans who could not procreate by themselves but had the cultural and economic capital to adopt.[14]

Not only scholars but also some adoptees see themselves as "completely involuntary immigrants." A blogger who named himself/herself Immigrant Adoptee argues in his/her blog article in 2009 that transnational adoption creates "involuntary immigrants," not through the choice of themselves or their (adoptive) families, but as the result of the adoption industry.

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[11] Tessler, Gamache, and Liu, *West Meets East*, 154.
[12] Richard M Lee, "Overlooked Asian Americans: The Diaspora of Chinese adoptees," *Asian Journal of Counselling* 13, no. 1 (2006): 51-52, 54.
[13] Kim, *Ends of Empire*, 169, 189.
[14] "Surplus products" (including mixed-raced babies for adoption) is one of the key words in Kim's book, which can be seen in different chapters, but especially Chapter Five, See Kim, *Ends of Empire*, 193-236.

According to the blogger, adoptees from Asia or South America share similarities with conventional immigrants in several aspects. First, like conventional immigrants, many adoptees came with the visa sponsored by immediate relatives, meaning their adoptive parents, and have to obtain citizenship through naturalization. A failure to do so might incur deportation to their countries of origin. Second, adoptees from Asia or South America are viewed as "perpetual foreigners" by U.S. mainstream society and have to endure "racist insults and ignorant comments" and sometimes become victims of "hate crimes." Third, the anti-immigrant tone and xenophobia held by nativists do not distinguish adoptees from non-adoptee immigrants, thus creating a hostile environment in which any immigrants, especially non-white ones, "look illegal."[15]

The group of deportable adoptees the blogger mentions are those to whom the 2000 Child Citizenship Act does not apply, and the deportation cases occurred in the past few years demonstrate that like conventional immigrants, transnational adoptees, even those adopted into white families, are at high risk of being excluded from the U.S. national body. The act, in effect from February 27, 2001, gives automatic citizenship to adoptees under 18 years old before the date, but does not protect those who are older.[16] In recent years, numerous Asian adoptees were reported to have been deported to their birth countries as illegal immigrants. On November 17, 2016, a 41-year-old Korean adoptee named Adam Crapser was deported to Korea.[17] Adam was adopted by an abusive white American family when he was three, was abandoned six years later and readopted by another, more abusive white family, the Crapsers. It was later proved that neither of his two adoptive families applied for his citizenship. In 2012 when he tried to apply for a green card, he was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, which discovered that he had "a criminal record that made him subject to deportation" as an illegal immigrant. His

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[15] "Involuntary (Im)migrant: International Adoption and Immigration," accessed June 25, 2017, http://adopteeimmigrant.blogspot.com/2009/12/international-adoption-and-immigration_11.html

[16] "The Child Citizenship Act of 2000," accessed June 25, 2017, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/pressrelease/ChildCitizenshipAct_120100.pdf.

[17] "Korean-America Man, 41, Who was adopted from South Korea for New Life in the U.S. when He was Three is Deported," *Daily Mail Online*, November 18, 2016.

crimes include burglary—specifically, breaking into the Crapser house to fetch his belongings from Korea after his adoptive parents drove him out —that led to his imprisonment for twenty-five months and a fight with his roommate. Without legal status in the United States, he could never hold a job for longer than 90 days.[18] Even so, he started to establish a stable life: he got married, fathered three children, and started to pursue college degrees until he was deported to Korea, a country where he did not know the language and culture while leaving his wife and children behind in the United States.

Crapser was not alone; rather, he was one of the sixteen percent of Korean-born adoptees who were never naturalized.[19] The Adoptee Rights Campaign, an activist group for international adoptees, estimates that about 35,000 legally adopted people in the United States do no have citizenship.[20] Besides Adam, another ten to twelve Korean adoptees were deported along with some adoptees from other countries, such as Thailand and Brazil, who were also reported to have been deported to their birth countries.[21]

Crapser's deportation ignited panic among transnational adoptees and their adoptive families in the United States. Becky Belcore, a Korean adoptee and board member of National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, comments that "America failed Adam multiple times." She said adoptees were "shocked" because "[they] just can't believe that people who were adopted by US citizens as children can be deported back to a country that [they] don't even know. Just the cruelty of that was shocking." Justin Ki Hong, another Korean adoptee who does not have U.S. citizenship either, murmurs that "[t]hat scares me…I could be in that situation." As Crapser's deportation was circulated in news media all over the country, "a wave of adoptees and their families" contacted Crapser's lawyer Lori Walls and told her that "they were terrified."[22]

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[18] Maggie Jones, "Adam Crapser's Bizarre Deportation Odyssey," *New York Times Magazine*, April 1, 2015, accessed June 26, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/01/magazine/adam-crapsers-bizarre-deportation-odyssey.html.
[19] Alyssa Jeong Perry, "Korean Adoptee in Immigration Battle Fights to Remain in His Country," *The Guardian*, April 3, 2015.
[20] "A South Korean Man Adopted by Americans Prepares for Deportation," *New York Times*, November 1, 2016.
[21] Jones, "Adam Crapser's Bizarre Deportation Odyssey."
[22] Catherin E. Shoichet, "Adam Crapser: Americans Adopted Him; Now He is Facing Deportation," *CNN news*, November 7, 2016,

Although most Chinese adoptees were granted citizenship by the 2000 Child Citizenship Act, Adam's case and the anti-immigrant environment in the Trump era threw Chinese adoptees into panic as well. One Chinese adoptee blogger with an alias Luckychinesegirl wrote:

> I always say how grateful I am to not grow up as an illegal-out-of-quota child in China. I tell myself "thank God there are no family planning police to take me away from my family in America." And I told myself this right until I saw Donald Trump. He talked about dragging immigrants out of their homes and throwing them into trucks—shipping them off. First, a Guatemala adoptee had an incident trying to get the driver's license. Then, Adam Crapser was deported back to Korea without warning. … My birth in China was illegal and now, my future in America is illegal. My very life is illegal… I know as long as I am with my white mom, I'm safe. But once it's just me, it only takes one person to deport me to China. I have no family to help me in China. You know what's scary? It only takes one American bigot to orphan a Chinese adoptee.[23]

By emphasizing her status as "illegal" both in China and America, the blogger expresses her vulnerability as an immigrant under the Trump Administration. Like most paper children immigrants/adoptees who lived in constant fear of being deported, she is fearful of being deported to China as an "illegal" immigrant, and Crapser's deportation makes her fear tangible. Her mentioning that her sense of security in the United States only comes from her white mother reveals that the only privilege Chinese adoptees have is through their white parents and families, yet when they grow up and become independent, they are as vulnerable as conventional immigrants, or even worse; they could be "orphaned" again. Therefore, the fact that contemporary adoptees were legally adopted by Americans does not make them more assimilable as members of U.S. national body than conventional immigrants.

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accessed June 25, 2017, http://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/04/us/adam-crapser-deportation/index.html.

[23] Lucychinesegirl, "Illegal," accessed July 1, 2017, https://luckychinesegirl.tumblr.com/.

Red Thread Broken: Adoptee Blog Narratives

In April 2014, an adoptee posted an article in his/her blog to criticize a video entitled *If You Wouldn't Say it About A Boob Job* created by a white adoptive father to teach the public how to ask curious questions about transracial adoption. The blogger's alias *收养的人*—the simplified Chinese translation of "an adoptee"—indicates that s/he is an adoptee from China. The article conveys a key message to adoptive parents: "please stop sharing so much of your children's stories to the world." It also criticizes how the video objectifies adoptees by comparing them to breasts and ignores adoptees' feelings concerning uncomfortable questions from the public by dealing only with the feelings of adoptive parents.[24] The article is just one posting in his blog *Red Thread Broken: Exposing the Red Thread Myth in Relation to Adoption*, which, as the blog title says, aims to break the red thread myth created by adoptive parents. The red thread is an invisible thread of destiny between a man and a woman in a Chinese legend, but has become a popular trope many adoptive parents use to rationalize adoption as a predestined connection between them and their adopted children. With this title, the blogger challenges narratives produced by adoptive parents.

This section analyzes blog articles written and/or posted by contemporary Chinese adoptees and demonstrates how they both reveal struggles similar to those of paper son/de facto adotee Leon depicted in Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, and how they complicate and/or challenge narratives created by white adoptive parents and the U.S. mainstream media. Karen McCullagh argues that blogs offer participants a space between public and private spheres: by posting anonymously and exposing minimal personal information about themselves, bloggers can freely reveal their private thoughts and lives in the blogospace accessible to other participants or even the public, depending on how they set up their degree of accessibility.[25] Moreover, blogs enjoy advantages over printed media by allowing interaction among adoptees without

[24] "If You Wouldn't Say it About A Boob Job (+Response)," accessed July 3, 2017, https://redthreadbroken.wordpress.com/2014/04/29/if-you-wouldnt-say-it-about-a-boob-job-response/.
[25] Karen McCullagh, "Blogging: Self Presentation and Privacy," *Information & Communications Technology Law* 17, no. 1, (March 2008): 17.

limitations of time and space. According to Volker Eisenlauer and Christian Hoffmann, blogs encourage comments and responses from readers (interactivity), incorporate multiple modes of media (multimodality), assemble texts in multi-linear ways rather than in a single-linear, causal, and temporal order (multi-linearity), and allow more fragmented but internally related texts (fragmentation).[26] Therefore, the genre of blogs fits the way adoptee lives have been fragmented or disrupted by their relinquishment in China and adoption into the United States, and function as a vital venue in which Chinese adoptees can create diverse but powerful narratives.

Most adoptee narratives discussed in this section are postings in the group adoptee blog called *Confessions of An Adoptee*, but I also pay attention to individual blogs of Chinese adoptees. *Confessions of An Adoptee,* maintained by college-student adoptees, contains more than 600 postings from 2014 to 2017 by adoptees of all ages and ethnicities/races. Many Chinese adoptees—deduced either from posts which reveal that they were adopted from China or from blog names, such as *thechineseadoptee*, *luckychinesegirl*, *chinalostdaughters* —post frequently on the group blog. I focus on *Confessions of An Adoptee* for several reasons. First, this group blog goes out of its way to create a space for adoptees to "share their feelings, experiences, worries, fears, and dreams with others," as the homepage claims.[27] To achieve this purpose, adoptees are encouraged to post anonymously unless they clearly state that they hope to disclose their identities. As one adoptee states in his/her posting #29, s/he wants to "speak my truth as an adoptee without judgment or criticism or without fear of rejection or exclusion. I want my voice."[28] Due to its safe environment as well as the similar thoughts and feelings shared in hundreds of postings of earlier adoptees, the group blog continues to attract adoptees each day. This does not mean that the adoptees have formed a unanimous collective voice;

[26] Volker Eisenlauer and Christian Hoffmann, "Once Upon a Blog… Storytelling in Weblogs," in *Narrative Revisited*, ed. Christian R. Hoffmann (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 92.
[27] *Confessions of an Adoptee*, accessed July 1, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[28] "#29," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

instead, the friendly, relaxing environment encourages different, even oppositional views.[29] Therefore, the group blog helps adoptees find similarities among each other and allows different and individuated voices, through which the bloggers have formed a vibrant adoptee community.

Second, this blog welcomes adoptees of different ages and racial /ethnic backgrounds, thus providing a rich context of adoptees' feelings and experiences that allow us to understand circumstances of contemporary Chinese adoptees in the United States. The blog reveals some issues unique to Chinese adoptees, such as the birth-planning policy, but most of Chinese adoptees' struggles are common among all transracial adoptees. Furthermore, besides those who clearly identify themselves as Chinese adoptees, I suspect that many other anonymous postings were written or posted by Chinese adoptees as well. Therefore, although I pay special attention to the postings that can identify the authors as Chinese adoptees, I also keep an eye on the common issues faced by all transracial adoptees. These common issues include feelings of having been abandoned or orphaned and the subsequent troubling sense of insecurity, their difficulty in building up trust in long-term relationships, and their fear of being abandoned again by their adoptive parents.

A large number of adoptees have also posted about yearnings to know the missed part of their lives before their adoption and the desperation caused by the unlikelihood of finding the answers. As one adoptee named Ann laments through her personal blog *theadoptee-diaries*:

> If life is like a book, then being adopted is like having chapter one ripped out and thrown away. The story still goes on, but it isn't the same. Key characters will be missing, background and context won't be known, and there will be questions left unanswered. Even if there will be a happily ever after, the protagonist might never find out how their journey began.[30]

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[29] This point of view is raised by one blogger. See "#146," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 6, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

[30] Anna (this posting does not have a title), *Confessions of an Adoptee, accessed July 7, 2017,* http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

Ann's narrative not only reveals her helpless desire to find out the part of her life before adoption, but also challenges the fairytale narrative constructed by white adoptive parents that adoptees live "happily ever after" in their adoptive families. A Chinese adoptee compares, in his/her blog *fernclouds*, an adoptee's life with a 3,000-piece puzzle, that though beautiful, misses one piece so the puzzle remains unsolved and incomplete.[31] A poem posted by another adoptee through his/her personal blog *prepositional* epitomizes the desperate sense of loss:

> hello /can you help me/ i am lost/ though you cannot tell it/i have a house /but i don't know where home is/i have a family/ but i don't know my ancestors /i have a birthplace / but i don't know where i came from /i will look into your face for hints of mine / i will listen to your voice for a familiar note /do you know me? /are you hiding me in yourself? // i am unworthy /they say/ unworthy of history /unworthy of answers /unworthy /unworthy /unworthy // hello /can you help me / i am lost.[32]

In this little poem, the adoptee constructs a sense of loss and powerlessness throughout the verses, which is reinforced by his/her insistence on lowercasing "I" to relativize him/herself as well as by the multiple contradictions of having a house, family, and birthplace but lacking a home, ancestors, and a place of origin. Over pages and pages of postings, the feelings of loss, of incompleteness, and of a life full of unanswered questions pervade the group blog.

While Chinese adoptees share common feelings with adoptees from other ethnicities/races, they also express experiences and sentiments similar to those of paper son Leon constructed in Ng's *Bone*. An adoptee expresses his/her feeling of being stuck between China and America and between two families, two cultures, and two countries—America, "a land of opportunity, my home and the country I would die for" and China, his/her birth place and the location of "millions of people who look just like me."[33] While most paper children immigrants/adoptees realized that America was not a land of opportunity once they entered the country, this adoptee

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[31] Fernclouds (this posting does not have a title), *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[32] Prepositional, "Hello," Confessions of an Adoptee, accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[33] "#259," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

still believes so and would die for it, probably because s/he was adopted into a middle-class white family. Even so, s/he states that the tug of war between the two countries and two homes will never end.[34] This blogger echoes another adoptee who writes that:

> I wish I would wake up one day and not be stuck between two cultures. I wish I could wake up and see the face of my birth mother. I wish I could wake up and not be in the minority. I want to wake up and find myself in the majority. Most of all I wish I could wake up one morning and not struggle with my identity as a Chinese adoptee always stuck Somewhere Between.[35]

By capitalizing the two words "Somewhere Between," this posting is reminiscent of the 2011 documentary *Somewhere Between*, which features four Chinese adoptees, and emphasizes his/her status of being stuck somewhere between two countries and two cultures. The two adoptees also express a similar longing to be in the majority or among "millions of people who look just like me," a longing that set them apart from paper children immigrants/adoptees who primarily lived within the Chinese immigrant community. Nonetheless, their feeling of being stuck between two countries and two families are exactly the same as those of paper children.

Some contemporary adoptees also see themselves as being displaced from both China and the United States, the same predicament Leon in *Bone* has. For instance, the female blogger of *heritagelost* posts that she does not believe she belongs to either country because China was the country that led to her "abandonment" and America has a long history of Asians "being oppressed by the hierarchy of race and subsequent systems of power and privilege." She thus feels "permanently displaced."[36] Though her displacement from China was caused by her being "abandoned" rather than willingly immigrating like most paper children did, her displacement from the United States is caused by the same reason as that of paper children, that Asians have long been racially discriminated against and excluded in the United States.

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[34] "#259."
[35] "#321," *Confessions of an Adoptee*, accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[36] Heritagelost (this posting does not have a title), *Confessions of an Adoptee, accessed July 5, 2017,* http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

Another similarity between Ng's image of Leon and Chinese adoptees depicted in the blogs is the feeling of being an outsider in one's family. A female Chinese adoptee Maya Konz recounts in an interview how the public "see her not a part of the family." She recalls that when traveling with her white parents in Washington D.C., she encountered an old woman who gave her a pamphlet which was for exchange foreign students.[37] Maya's account is echoed by another Chinese female adoptee Anna Eldridge:

> Now when I am out and about with my mom, people don't automatically make the mother-daughter connection like they used to. For example, if we go out to a restaurant like Qdoba where you order in line, I'm always asked how I want to pay, as if I'm there by myself. The staff never puts the Asian teen together with the white woman behind me. Or if I'm out with my mom and one of my friends who is white, then she's always assumed to be the daughter, and I'm just the girl tagging along for the day. I find myself loudly saying the word "mom" when we are in public, to avoid being labeled as the foreign exchange student, the at-risk teen being mentored or just a random Asian girl standing next to a white woman.[38]

In this narrative, the public automatically disconnected Anna from her white adoptive mother and grouped her mother with her white friend, indicating that the mainstream society still presumes that transracial families "deviate from the norm" and do not fit into the ideal American family that is purely white, as one Chinese adoptee, Sam Lanevi, argues in her *Huffpost* article.[39] Neither Maya nor Anna discloses whether they themselves feel like strangers in their white adoptive families, but some Chinese adoptees do claim that they have this feeling. A Chinese adoptee blogger Nothingspecial3, for example, laments that being

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[37] Maya Konz, "Yes, I'm from China. And Yes Those People are My Parents," accessed July 19, 2017, http://kuow.org/post/yes-im-china-and-yes-those-people-are-my-parents.
[38] Anna Eldridge, "The Hardest Part About Growing Up as a Transracial Adoptee," *Huffpost*, accessed July 19, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anna-eldridge/the-hardest-part-about-growing-up-as-a-transracial-adoptee_b_6679352.html.
[39] Sam Lanevi, "The Question about My Transracial Family I'm Tired of Being Asked," *Huffpost*, January 24, 2015, accessed July 10, 2017. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-lanevi/biological-and-adoptive-f_b_6188436.html.

adopted means being the "black sheep of the family" because s/he always feels "misplaced."[40] In short, these postings reveal that many contemporary Chinese adoptees have similar struggles with paper children immigrants/adoptees.

However, unlike paper children immigrants/adoptees, or conventional Chinese immigrants in general, contemporary Chinese adoptees have to face far more complicated issues since most of them were adopted by white families and disconnected from Chinese culture and ethnicity. For instance, many depict their status of being strangers to Chinese culture and their birth country, demonstrating how they are grappling with their issue of Chinese ethnicity. In posting #208, a blogger expresses his/her wish that his/her adoptive parents had gotten a Mandarin babysitter or offered him/her some Chinese lessons when s/he was little so that s/he would not feel "as much of an outsider" to Chinese culture.[41] Some other adoptees feel irritated because their Chineseness or Asianness is challenged, as one blogger cries out in his/her posting "Anger": "Don't fucking tell me that 'I'm not Asian' or 'I'm less Asian than someone' just because I [was] adopted from China."[42] The adoptee's words suggest that to the group of people whom s/he addresses—though we do not know who they are, the U.S. public or the Chinese/Asian immigrant community—being adopted by white parents has made Chinese adoptees less Chinese or Asian than conventional Chinese/Asian immigrants.

A variety of cultural products, such as the documentary *Somewhere Between* and current research on Chinese adoptees done by Jennifer Ann Ho and Andrea Louie, have shown how the adoptees' in-between status leads to their sense of fluidity, hybridity, or ambiguity of racial, cultural and ethnic identities.[43] Nevertheless, the blog narratives complicate these findings by displaying many adoptees' confusion and struggles to figure out who they really are. Some

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[40] Nothingspecial3, "Adoption 2," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[41] "#208," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[42] Americanheroines, "Anger," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[43] Jennifer Ho sees Asian adoptees as racially ambiguous subjects, see Ho, *Racial Ambiguity in Asian American Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2015), 44; Andrea Louie argues that Chinese adoptees exert agency in constructing and claiming new forms of identity to "define new group boundaries and challenge existing notions of both racial and ethnic identity." See Louie, *How Chinese Are You*, 30.

consider themselves as outsiders to both American and Asian/Chinese communities, as one adoptee Camille reveals in her posting "Cultural Crises":

> …Throughout most of my life I have always struggled between whether I would consider my ethnicity as Chinese or white. The issue is, I don't identity myself with either. I'm a minority within both American and Asian cultures and I've always found it hard to identify myself. When people ask me 'Where are you from?' I hesitate…I remember when I was young I would always want to circle Caucasian as my race because my entire family is white. I remember when I walked on my first day of elementary school someone asked me "Why is your mom white if you are a chinita?"[44]

Camille's narrative shows that her attempt to identify herself as white was thwarted when she was little. Living among the white community as a racial minority and being detached from Asian cultures, she feels estranged to both, and such a feeling of estrangement is commonly shared among Chinese adoptees who were adopted by white families.

There is also a narrative among the bloggers that Chinese adoptees, most of whom are female, often meet people who exoticize them and/or perceive their adoptive parent-child/sibling relationship in sexualized terms. Japanese American journalist Annie Nakao observes that as growing numbers of white Americans adopt Chinese baby girls, some adoptive parents use "China Doll" for their adoptees as a term of "endearment," although others "are horrified" by those who use the term.[45] Her observation is echoed by blogger Luckychinesegirl who posted that the public has given Chinese adoptees "pet names, like 'China Doll' at age 15, thinking it's cute."[46] Isabelle St. Clair, another Chinese adoptee as well as a scholar of Chinese adoptee narratives, has also found that Chinese adoptees are objectified and commodified by white

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[44] "Cultural Crises," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[45] Annie Nakao, "Sensitivity Training around 'China Doll,'" *SF Gate*, accessed July 6, 2017, http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Sensitivity-training-around-China-doll-2825152.php. Accessed July 19, 2017.
[46] "#368. 'I Wish I Was Adopted,'" *Confessions of an Adoptee*, accessed July 20, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

adoptive parents who often imagine Chinese baby girls as "beautiful, porcelain-like dolls they could wrap up and bring home."[47] Although these observers emphasize that the term "China Doll" is used to show Chinese adoptees' cuteness, that some adoptive parents are "horrified" by the term indicates that it is also associated with the stereotype of Asian, especially Chinese women, being exotic, subservient, and sexually attractive, like a doll with which white men play.

As "cute" little Chinese girls adopted in the 1990s have grown up into adolescence or early adulthood, the horror some adoptive parents felt seems to have been predictive: some Chinese adoptees narrate that they have been racialized with the stereotypical image of sexualized, exoticized Asian female bodies. While fifteen-year-old Anna Eldridge feels frustrated that the public disconnects her from her white mother, she admits that she needs more strength to fight against the sexually-alluring-Asian-mate label she is given when going out with her adoptive father or brothers:

> Last year, I went to a special event dinner evening with my father. I wore a nice dress, heels, and make-up, which is pretty rare for me. I was so excited to be out with my dad at a formal event, but all of my happiness and excitement was crushed when two of his colleagues assumed I was his Asian mate. I seriously wanted to dig myself a hole and not come out the rest of the night. The same kind of assumptions are now made when I'm with my older Caucasian brothers. Sadly, most people assume I am the girlfriend and never the sister. It's in those moments I wish I could shout, 'I AM RELATED TO THEM!'—especially when I see the male looks that [people] sometimes give to my brothers which seem to say, 'Way to score with that Asian girlfriend.' Coming to terms with THAT stereotype is the subject for another day, of course, but when I see our photos together, I only see big brother/little sister.[48]

Anna's narrative reveals that the public not only delegitimizes her relationship with her white

[47] Isabelle St. Clair. "Being-in-Between: Narratives of Identity and Community by Chinese American Adoptees," *Honors Thesis Collection*, 490, accessed July 7, 2017, http://repository.wellesley.edu/thesiscollection/490.
[48] Anna Eldridge, "The Hardest Part About Growing Up as a Transracial Adoptee."

family, but confines her to the racialized image of Asian women being sexually attractive and morally loose, which further challenges the color-blind ideology and the dichotomized ideologies many adoptive parents hold about adoptees and immigrants.

Blog articles written by Anna and other adoptees also reveal how adoptees are often infantilized by U.S. society and some adoptive parents. Anna recounts how "growing older as a transracial adoptee" is difficult:

> Like all kids, I love the idea of becoming a young adult. I'll soon be able to drive, go out on dates and one day go to college. But there's one part about growing older that is difficult for me. I have found that as I age, it's harder for the public to acknowledge me as being part of my family. It's much easier as a transracial adoptee when you are a little kid, because when people see you with your white parents, their brains click to, 'that must be their adopted daughter.' But as I grew into my teens and started to become a young woman, that definitely changed.[49]

With white Americans adopting Chinese female babies becoming what Choy calls "a social norm" and under the powerful discourse of rescuing female children from the "dying rooms" in Chinese state-run orphanages, the scene of white parents with little Chinese girls is widely accepted by U.S. public as it demonstrates U.S. benevolence and humanitarianism.[50] However, when the adorable little girls grow up into Asian women, the aura of the United States as the savior of Chinese orphans fades, and the racially different adoptees become more and more "out of place" in the picture of the ideal American family as being white and racially pure. Moreover, during the Exclusion Era, in U.S. dominant press representations, the notion that Chinese female bodies were filthy and contagious, infecting young white men and bringing subsequent contagion to white women, provided a powerful metaphor for the ethnic cleansing of Chinese from society.[51] Even today, the sexually attractive but threatening—or dragon lady—image of

[49] Anna Eldridge, "The Hardest Part About Growing Up as a Transracial Adoptee."
[50] Choy, *Global Families*, 1.
[51] Phaelzer, *Driven Out*, 89.

Asian/Chinese women still dominates U.S. popular culture.[52] Such a tremendous shift in the public perception toward Chinese adoptees thus reflects both how the U.S. public views grown-up female Chinese adoptees as threatening and how it considers adoptees acceptable only as children. In other words, adoptee as an identity is confined to children.

Being infantilized is a common feeling shared among adoptees. Quite a few bloggers express the same experience of feeling happy as children but finding life more difficult as adults. Self-published adult adoptee anthology *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype* also criticizes how U.S. society institutionally infantilizes adoptees. In this anthology, adoptee Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston argues that U.S. society "value[s] children in an abstract and charitable sense," and this sense is transferred to adoption "when society forgets that adopted children become adults and when society treats adult adoptees the way children and adolescents are treated." Therefore, being adopted gives her "an imposed age" as a perpetual child.[53] Another adoptee Lynn Grubb contends that adoptees are like Peter Pan in that "according to the authorities inside the adoption world," they never grow up: in terms of requesting (birth or adoption) information about themselves, they have to "depend solely on the good will and decisions" of their adoptive parents, social workers and government employees, "all of who get to possess my information instead of [me]."[54] Although one of the editors of the anthology is Diane Rene Christian, a white adoptive mother of two Chinese girls, the whole book is written by adult adoptees and raises the important issue of adoptees being infantilized in U.S. society, an issue repeated in numerous postings in the group blog.

The adoptee bloggers also interpret what adoption means to them, further challenging narratives created by white adoptive parents and the U.S. mainstream media. To be sure, not all

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[52] The sexually alluring but threatening dragon lady image is widely seen in U.S. popular culture, for instance, in film *Kill Bill* (2003) and television show *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002).

[53] Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston. "Discovering My Imposed Age and the Effects of the Institutionalization of Perpetual Childhood." In *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype*. ed. by Diane Christian and Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston (The An-Ya Project: 2013), 15-16.

[54] Lynn Grubb, "Mother May I?" In *Perpetual Child: Dismantling the Stereotype*. ed. by Diane Christian and Amanda H.L. Transue-Woolston (The An-Ya Project: 2013), 25.

adoptees criticize adoption. For instance, the blogger of #420 states that s/he is "proud to be an adoptee" and the blogger of #97 claims that s/he loves to be adopted because "the people I've met, the experience I've had, the friends I've made, the friends I've lost, and the opportunities I've been privileged to have are things I would have never had in China."[55] The blogger of #246 takes a neutral stance by viewing his/her identity of Chinese adoptee as "a double-edged sword": s/he could be "grateful and happy for the life and sacrifices that were made on behalf of my life" and "could be forever devastated and resentful," but s/he decides to choose the former.

However, a perusing of the more than 600 postings reveals that the vast majority of adoptees consider their adoption as "devastating," thus challenging the commonly-held view in the U.S. mainstream media that adoption is for the child's best interests and that the adoptees are "lucky" and should be "grateful." A female Chinese adoptee complains that "my adoption has given me nothing but pain, grief, and identity issues."[56] The blogger Luckychinesegirl describes what adoption costs adoptees as a response to one non-adoptee peer who said that "I wish I was adopted":

> …So, Miss "I wish I was adopted," your wish will total up to be your entire life. It costs the following: your sanity, your dignity, your family, your adoptive family, your rights to record, your history, your culture, understanding and support. And these are the people who will be making life-long decisions for you, but ultimately, you will have to pay: [the] Chinese government, family planning polic[y], your adoptive family, the adoption agency, the orphanage. So, do you still wish you were adopted?[57]

While these two adoptees view their adoptions as only pain or costing their entire lives, another contributor gives adoption from China multiple meanings in his/her poem:

> My name is a/story stolen /by your /white picket/ fencing me in like/ a pet you

[55] *Confessions of an Adoptee*, accessed July 5, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[56] "#324." *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 7, 2017*,* http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.
[57] "#368. 'I Wish I Was Adopted.'"

> bought for company/ because white always look better /when there's a/brown/black/or yellow/there to compare/so you can point and/declare how wonderful you are/to have rescued a stray/but I was not a wild thing to be tamed/ I was free.[58]

Besides viewing adoption from China as white people's action of stealing through which s/he lost freedom, the poet also views him/herself as a pet the white parents bought for company and for flaunting their own humanitarianism in rescuing and embracing the stray, non-white child. This poem thus repudiates the narrative of rescue created by the U.S. media. By using the group blog as a venue to express their feelings and thoughts freely, Chinese adoptees have constructed powerful and diverse narratives that challenge and/or complicate the ones created by white adoptive parents and the U.S. mainstream media and display struggles and predicaments similar to those of conventional Asian immigrants, especially paper children immigrants/adoptees.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to break the dichotomy of immigrants as illegal, unassimilable outsiders and adoptees as legal, assimilable members of white families and the U.S. national body through two assertions. First, I have discussed how the dichotomized ideologies of immigrants and adoptees were created in the United States and how Asian adoptees who were legally adopted by Americans are treated as unassimilable immigrants by the public and have the same risk of being deported to their original countries. Second, I have demonstrated that contemporary Chinese adoptees and conventional Chinese immigrants, especially paper children immigrants/adoptees, share similar struggles of loss, of displacement, and of being stuck between two families and two countries as outsiders in their adoptive/paper families. Through blogs, the adoptees have also constructed diverse but powerful narratives to complicate and/or challenge those created by white adoptive parents and the U.S. mainstream media.

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[58] "147 (this posting is different from '#147')," *Confessions of an Adoptee,* accessed July 7, 2017, http://confessions-of-an-adoptee.tumblr.com.

While these postings provide a window through which we understand adoptees' sentiments, feelings, and experiences, we should be careful not to allow these narratives to flatten out the complexity and diversity of the whole group of Chinese adoptees. It is likely that the bloggers might influence each other, which partly explains why the vast majority of postings present negative views and attitudes towards adoption. Some other adoptees' stories are worth noticing as well. For instance, in the above-mentioned documentary *Somewhere Between*, which features four Chinese teenage adoptees, two of them, Haley and Fang, choose not to mourn for their lost roots but go to China to look for their birth parents. Haley finally finds hers. Fang fails, but in the process she finds a sense of mission in helping disabled children in Chinese orphanages. A third adoptee named Ann, however, decides not to search for her birth parents.[59] I did not analyze this film because it was made by a white adoptive mother, Linda Goldstein Knowlton, and is thus not exclusively a cultural work of adoptee narratives. However, this film offers us a glimpse into how adoptees might take different life trajectories as they grow up. As Jenna, one of the adoptees, comments at the end of the film, "we have this commonality about us, this community, but at the same time, we're each at our own place in our own journey."[60] It is thus worth keeping our eyes and minds open to more diverse adoptee narratives coming out in the near future.

[59] The film does not show Jenna looking for her birth parents, but in 2012, she appeared in Wuhan, the city in which she was relinquished and adopted, to look for her birth parents. See "Bei Meiguoren Lingyang Nuhai Guilai Xunzhao Qinsheng Fumu"被美國人領養女孩歸來尋找親生父母[A Girl, Adopted by Americans, Returns to Look for her Biological Parents], *Beijing Youth Daily*, July 8, 2012.

[60] *Somewhere Between*, film, the United States: Long Shot Factor, 2011.

Conclusion

On September 18, 2016, the governmental Birth-Planning Committee in Yichang, the second-largest city of Hubei Province, issued an open letter on its website to call on the public servants in the Communist Party and the Communist Youth League to set the good example of having a second child in their families: Young servants are encouraged to take the initiative and elders are required to "educate and urge their children" to have a second child. They are also required to propagate about the risks of losing the only child and the advantages of having two children and to guide people to "responsibly" have their second children. The letter was issued because of the problems of aging and low birth rate in the city as well as the cold reaction from Yichang residents towards the "two children policy" that started on January 1, 2016, primarily due to the economic pressure of raising children in China. According to Tianming Chen, the writer of the letter and birth-planning official, he was inspired by a similar open letter issued by the Communist Party and Communist Youth League of the Central Government in 1980 calling upon Communist public servants to lead the policy of one family having only one child, which symbolized the beginning of what the Western media calls the "one child policy."[1]

During the interval between the two letters, the birth-planning policy and the subsequent phenomenon of (female) baby abandonment, placement in and adoption from state-run welfare houses aroused attention from all over the world. In the United States, as Toby Alice Volkman observes, until this wave of Chinese adoption there had never been another group of transnational adoptees that arrived "in such large numbers, in so few years, of roughly the same age and largely the same gender."[2] Indeed, post-1990s adoption from China has become a prominent phenomenon.

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[1] "Yichang Gongkaixin Haozhao Sheng Erhai: Xiwang Gongzhi Renyuan Zuo Biaoshuai, Xingcheng Shengyu Xiao Qihou"宜昌公開信號召生二孩，希望公職人員做表率，形成生育小氣候[An Open Letter in Yichang Calls for Birthing the Second Child: Hoping Public Servants to Set the Model and Shape the Environment of Having the Second Child in the City], accessed May 11, 2017, http://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1531980.

[2] Volkman, "Embodying Chinese Culture," 83.

However, transnational adoption is not only a phenomenon; it is itself a project in which competing, complex discourses, narratives, and ideologies are constructed and circulated by mainstream media and individuals from both the sending and receiving countries. Moreover, transnational adoption did not occur only recently, but can be traced back to 1882 when the Chinese Exclusion Act prompted the practice of paper children immigration and generated de facto adoptive relationships between paper children and their paper families. This dissertation has traced the history of transnational adoption from China in different time periods and examines how cultural texts of diverse forms represent adoption. It interrogated how, as a project, different political entities—the Unites States, China, and the British empire represented by the Hong Kong Colonial government—and individuals, including white adoptive parents, Hong Kong birth parents, paper children immigrants/adoptees, and contemporary adoptees, have created meanings through cultural texts.

My dissertation contributes to the current scholarship in multiple ways. First, by juxtaposing a variety of cultural texts from the United States, early Cold War Hong Kong, and post-1990s China, this project engages in current conversations in transnational, transpacific studies. I highlight the transnational nature of adoption from China, which is embodied not only in the traveling of people—adoptive parents and/or adoptees, but also in the circulation of ideas, information, and cultural norms crossing national boundaries. Borrowing from Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton's definition of transnationalism "as the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement," I emphasize that adoption from China involves crossing of the geographic, cultural, and political borders, encompassing both the adoptees' sending and receiving countries.[3] Moreover, adoption from China involves not only interracial adoption by white Americans, but also intra-race adoption as seen in the majority of Cold War adoption from Hong Kong, and in the paper children immigration/adoption in the Exclusion Era. This project

[3] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism: A New Analytical Framework for Understanding Migration," *Annals of New York Academy of Sciences* 645, No.1(1992): 1.

on transnational adoption, therefore, incorporates political entities and individuals crossing national, cultural, racial borders between the United States and Hong Kong or China.

My dissertation also contributes to the emergent transpacific studies. As Viet Thanh Nguyen and Janet Hoskins have argued, transpacific studies highlights "the traffic in peoples, cultures, capital, and ideas between 'America' and 'Asia,'" as well as the Pacific Ocean. It "acknowledges the importance of American power [and] stresses the necessity of foregrounding Asian and the Pacific," but simultaneously rejects both U.S-centered and Asian-centered perspectives, emphasizing that both sending and receiving parties are equally important.[4] In my analysis of Cold War and post-1990s adoptions, I have examined the contexts of both the sending and receiving countries/region as a way to decentralize the Unites States as the sole producer of knowledge about adoption from China, and foregrounded the active roles Hong Kong and mainland China have played in this process of knowledge production.

More importantly, by juxtaposing U.S.-led Western and Chinese media representations of Chinese orphans and adoption, I have demonstrated not only how China reacted towards Western condemnations, but also how it has actively participated in the discourse of transnational adoption to build upon its national image as a world power in the twenty-first century. Post-1990s adoption from China serves as a crucial site of shifting powers in geopolitical order right after the Cold War as the residual U.S. anti-Communist ideologies clashed with China's rise as an increasingly influential world power. More importantly, this clash was displayed in the powerful discourse of human rights in which both the sending and receiving countries of Chinese orphans were engaged. While U.S.-led Western media condemned China in the name of the human rights of Chinese women and female orphans, the Chinese media constructed the narratives of "big love beyond borders" and of the "beauty of humanity" by using the same humanitarian rhetoric. In this sense, my project transcends the Orientalist lens in which the West

[4] Viet Thanh Nguyen and Janet Hoskins, "Introduction: Transpacific Studies: Critical Perspectives on an Emerging Field," in *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*, ed. Janet Hoskins and Viet Thanh Nguyen (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014), 2, 17, 24, 27.

is deemed as the dominant knowledge producer of the East and demonstrates that China not only produces knowledge about itself, but also actively produces knowledge about the West.

This project pays attention to narratives and voices of individuals occupying diverse positions: white adoptive parents, birth parents during and after the Cold War, adoptees, and some Chinese investigative journalists. These narratives and voices confirm, complicate, or challenge the dominant discourses of both sending and receiving countries, and often contradict each other. For instance, adoption narratives created by white adoptive parents completely remove Chinese adoptive parents and birth fathers and depict birth mothers as passive, silent victims under multiple layers of oppression, including China's capitalism, patriarchal families and society, and the intervening state with its stringent implementation of the birth-planning policy. An analysis of the investigative reports, however, reveals that a large number of female orphans have been domestically adopted, both formally and informally, indicating how selective adoption narratives constructed by U.S. media and white adoptive parents are in portraying the United States and other Western countries as the only providers of permanent homes for Chinese orphans. Likewise, by juxtaposing paper children narratives and contemporary adoptees' blog narratives, my dissertation also displays, without losing the specificities of each group, the similar experiences and sentiments shared by the two groups as caught between two countries/cultures and two selves. The blog narratives also unsettle the "the right match" narrative constructed by white adoptive parents to rationalize transnational adoption and naturalize the adoptive parent-child relationship. By putting these various narratives together, my dissertation presents a complex picture of cultural representations about transnational adoption from China.

By positioning paper children immigration in the analytical framework of transnational adoption and arguing that transnational adoption is an essential part of Chinese immigration history, this project extends the scope of immigration studies. First of all, I challenge the commonly held understanding that paper children were illegal immigrants by viewing them as de

facto adoptees of their paper families. More importantly, paper children's immigration papers did not function solely to bring them into the United States; instead, the papers continued to shape the identities of paper children, their families, and their descendants. Most historians of Chinese immigration see how paper children immigration partly contributed to the stigmatization from the U.S. dominant discourse that the Chinese immigrant community during the Exclusion Era was illegal.[5] However, by foregrounding paper children's legal relationships with their paper families as de facto adoptive relationship, I argue that far from being a stigma, the practice of paper children immigration is a legacy their descendants pass down to future generations as evidence of their creativity and resilience in circumventing the exclusion acts, creating immigration opportunities for them and their descendants, and forming families in the midst of a hostile society that tried to eliminate Chinese families.

Moreover, I have tried to break the adoptee-immigrant dichotomy and argued that transnational adoptees are immigrants. Transnational adoptees have been brought to the United States not of their own will or for their own purposes, but more for the purpose of U.S. nation-building through the assertion of U.S. humanitarianism, multiculturalism, and superiority over both the British empire in the early Cold War and China both in and after the Cold War. The adoptees were also brought to the United States to satisfy the needs of American families, many of whom could not procreate themselves. This group of "involuntary immigrants" also disrupts the stereotypical image of immigrants that is often associated with poverty, ghetto, sweatshops, and illegality, as they grow up in white middle-class suburban areas, enjoying economic protection and educational opportunities.[6] In this sense, incorporating transnational adoption into Chinese immigration history unsettles the conventional image of immigrants and adds nuance and complexity to immigration studies.

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[5] This argument is seen in both Erika Lee's *At America's Gate,* 223-243 and Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects*, 203.

[6] The term "involuntary immigrants" is used by Jodi Kim in her book *Ends of Empire* to refer to Asian adoptees. See Jodi, *Ends of Empire*, 169. Richard M. Lee also uses the term in his article "Overlooked Asian Americans" to refer to, specifically, Chinese adoptees. See Lee, "Overlooked Asian Americans," 51-55.

However, enjoying a privileged life is only a partial story about Chinese adoptees. By breaking the adoptee-immigrant dichotomy, we see that they are often faced with the same racial, ethnic, and cultural issues as conventional Asian immigrants and viewed by the U.S. public as unassimilable outsiders—such as visitors and exchange students—rather than members of their white families. Moreover, as the vast majority of contemporary adoptees are female and a large number of them have entered into their early adulthood, some have found that they are perceived as their white fathers' or male siblings' Asian mates, indicating that they fall into the same racialized, sexualized, and exoticized stereotypical image as conventional Asian/Chinese women immigrants. Therefore, by treating them as immigrants and calling for the scholarships of both immigration studies and adoption studies to treat them as such, my dissertation foregrounds these issues as shared by conventional immigrants but often overlooked by their white parents.

This dissertation spans more than a century and brings paper children immigrants and adoptees who entered later into the same framework. It has illustrated the continuity between the two groups by incorporating paper children immigration during the Exclusion Era into transnational adoption and Cold War and post-1990s adoptions into Chinese immigration history. The practice of paper children immigration/adoption ended with the 1965 Immigration Act that allowed large waves of Asian immigrants to enter the United States, but its legacy persists until today as an increasing number of descendants of paper children are engaged in telling and retelling their stories through various means, for instance, on the Internet. Attention from immigration studies to post-1990s adoptees is even more urgent. To date, the majority of adoptees are still under the shadow —and ironically, the protection—of their white parents. On the one hand, white adoptive parents have constructed powerful narratives that have overshadowed adoptees' voices and narratives. On the other hand, compared with conventional Chinese immigrants, adoptees enjoy some level of privilege—or protection from the discriminatory society—through their white parents and families. However, when more and more adoptees reach their adulthood and step out of the shadow and protection of their white families,

the racial, cultural, ethnic issues similar to conventional immigrants might be increasingly prominent to them. In the near future, with more adoptees becoming economically, intellectually, and politically independent, and with more scholarly and cultural works engaged in the adoptees' connection with the Asian/Chinese immigrant community, it is very likely that these adoptees who entered as "involuntary immigrants" will infuse new blood to the community and bring forth new ways through which U.S. mainstream society perceives Asian immigrants, thus challenging the racialized image of immigrants in the U.S. dominant discourse.

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Waterloo Daily Courier (Iowa)

Billings Gazette (Montana)

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